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Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Thursday 22 May 2003

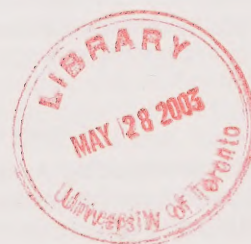
Jeudi 22 mai 2003

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Greffier
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 22 May 2003

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 22 mai 2003

*The House met at 1000.
Prayers.*

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

PEOPLE'S ACCESS TO THE FACTS ACT, 2003 LOI DE 2003 SUR L'ACCÈS DU PUBLIC AUX FAITS

Mr Wood moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 29, An Act to amend the Public Inquiries Act /
Projet de loi 29, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les enquêtes
publiques.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): The member has up to 10 minutes for his presentation.

Mr Bob Wood (London West): The short title of this bill is the People's Access to the Facts Act. It amends the Public Inquiries Act to allow any member of the Legislative Assembly to propose a resolution to set up an inquiry into any matter that the act allows. The assembly is required to vote on the resolution within 60 sessional days after it's proposed. Two thirds of the MPPs must support the introduction of an inquiry resolution. This in effect gives the Legislature itself the same power to call inquiries as the cabinet now has.

Members will be well aware, I think, of my interest in democratizing the workings of the Legislature. I believe more input from MPPs means there will be more input from all 12 million Ontarians. I think that more ideas being put forward, good debate on those ideas and good analysis will lead to better results for all Ontarians. I think that, as we consider how a democratic Legislature functions, we'll come to the conclusion that MPPs have to know the facts in order to do our job, and that the general public has to know the facts in order to make informed judgments on issues of the day.

Inquiries in Ontario have generally been done by independent people. They have tended to revolve around findings of fact and recommendations with respect to public policy. There was a bit of a sea change in attitude back in the early 1970s when there was an inquiry into certain aspects of the granting of a Hydro contract. That inquiry was done by a committee of the Legislature. The issue was basically whether or not the Premier had influenced the granting of the Hydro contract. At the end of that committee, there was a unanimous report finding

that the Premier had not in any way attempted to influence the granting of the contract. However, the government members said Hydro had not been in any way influenced by the Premier's personal acquaintance with the person getting the contract. The opposition members said they felt Hydro officials had been influenced by the fact this person was a friend of the Premier.

The net result of all that was there was a general perception among the public that the findings of fact made by the committee were done on a partisan basis as opposed to an objective basis. Since then, when the government has thought in terms of the need for an inquiry where findings of fact are required, they have tended almost invariably to refer it to an independent person.

I might say that I am of the view, as I think most Ontarians would be, that the calling of inquiries is primarily an executive function and should be an executive function. However, there should be a safeguard in our system to permit the Legislature to call an inquiry if there is a strong view within the Legislature from the elected people that one is needed. Since this is in effect overruling a decision of the cabinet, the threshold for the amount of support required should be higher than a simple majority. The bill proposes two thirds as the number of members who would have to support the bringing of a motion. There's no magic in two thirds; perhaps it should be three quarters or perhaps it should be 60%. But I would urge upon the House the proposition that this is really a legislative check on an executive function, and that because it is that, it should require something more than a simple majority to have it put before the House.

What this effectively means is that for the Legislature to move to set up an inquiry, there's going to have to be substantial support from the opposition side of the House, almost certainly from both opposition parties, and there's going to have to be substantial support at least from the government backbenchers. So we have a situation where if we are going to overrule a cabinet decision, there has to be some fairly widespread support among the MPPs, which is going to indicate widespread support from the public that such an inquiry is needed.

This is a mechanism used in a good number of democratic jurisdictions throughout the world. One of the classic ones is the American system, where the President has the right to veto legislation passed by the Congress, but on the other hand, the Congress has a right to override the veto of the President. The override of the veto is not by simple majority but by a two-thirds vote. There are all kinds of mechanisms of this nature that we can find throughout democratic jurisdictions. I think it's a

subtle thing of which the public may not immediately know all the details, but I think the public does understand the need for checks and balances in our system.

The British parliamentary system, of which we are heirs, has a 700-year history of looking for ways to make government work best for the people. One important aspect of that search for the right way of doing government business has always been to strike the right balance between the judiciary, the executive and the legislative branches of government. We do it a little differently than, say, our friends in the United States—I would argue we do it a little more subtly perhaps than our friends in the States—but it's just as important here and in a parliamentary system to have the right system of checks and balances among those branches of government. This proposal today really is what I believe to be a positive adjustment in the balance between the executive and the Legislature to make our system as a whole work better.

There may be some concerns raised today, and I'm going to be listening very closely to see what those may be. One may be that if we were to give this power to the Legislature it would be used irresponsibly, that we would get into partisan wrangling, invasions of privacy and concerns of that nature. I am not concerned that we may get into problems of that nature because I believe the members of the Legislature will use this power responsibly if it's given to them. They'll do that, one, because they want to do the right thing, and two, because the public is going to insist they do so. If members use a power of this nature irresponsibly, I think the electors are going to take note of that and act accordingly.

1010

I would invite members to give some careful thought to this. I would hope that should approval in principle be given today, this would be referred to one of the standing committees and I'm going to make a suggestion on that, if we get to that point today. I would hope that if we do, all members will take a look at the bill, look at ways in which it should be improved, and present amendments at that committee. Once the committee has done its work—and heard from the public, I hope, as well—I would hope that the bill might come back here for third and final reading.

I do think that process does matter, because if we have a better process, we get better results. That's really why I'm putting this proposal before the House today. The fundamental basis why I'm doing so is this: I think democracy and transparency do work, and I think this is a significant step to making them work better in this province. I would hope that after they've had a chance to consider what's in the bill and consider the principles behind it, put forward any amendments that are deemed to be needed to improve the bill, that we will indeed be able to pass this bill. Then, where a matter comes forward to the attention of the Legislature and the public where many people think an inquiry is needed, if the cabinet does not do what the majority of members think is needed or a majority of the public thinks is needed, if that majority is strong enough, it'll be possible for the

Legislature itself to take action. So we're perhaps less likely to hear concerns as we do now that things are being covered up and things are not being investigated that should be investigated. Should we have a bill along the lines of this bill, it's really all the representatives of the people who have made that ultimate decision. They have taken a look at the issue and not a sufficiently large number have concluded that action is needed.

I think if we bring this particular provision in, should the cabinet have some reluctance on some issue, as we find a petition circulating that's getting to two-thirds of members, that may be an opportunity for the cabinet to take a look at the situation again and take a second look at their decision to make sure that they're fully comfortable with what they've decided because, of course, the possibility exists that their decision may be changed by others.

I hope that we'll have a good debate today and I hope that at the end of the day we'll have second reading of the bill.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): This is kind of an amazing event this morning to be debating this bill—not that the bill itself is amazing. In fact, it sounds like something anyone would want to support. I've always believed that you don't go so much by what someone says but by what they do.

I'd like to look at this bill in the past eight years' history of this Legislature. In this bill, the mover indicates that it's so that people know the facts; let's get the facts out to the public. I couldn't support that principle more. But if we look at history over the last eight years, we have seen things as simple as freedom of information that exists so that people can know the facts—all kinds of blocks put into place on it. We're seeing government ministries very reluctant to give information. We're seeing six months or a year for them to respond. We've seen horrendous costs go on for an individual to get information. I believe the Provincial Auditor said a couple of years ago that if an MPP makes a request under freedom of information, it is channelled through the Premier's Office so that there's a further delay put in place. Clearly they don't want the facts out. We're seeing organizations like Hydro One set up in such a way that they're not subject to freedom of information. History tells us that this government hasn't tried in any way to conform to the philosophy of this bill. The Provincial Auditor, I believe, has on occasion raised the issue that even for the Provincial Auditor, an independent servant of this Legislature, ministries are blocking information to that office.

So when you say that people need to know the facts, we need to see some substance to it. We need to see some history that that, in fact, is what is happening.

The mover of this bill—and I commend him for bringing it forward; I'm sure he's very sincere—made reference to British parliamentary tradition. As recently as yesterday, the entire government voted against British parliamentary tradition when they would not support the

bill that the government was in contempt on presenting the budget at Magna rather than here in the Legislature. This government has said, "We don't respect British parliamentary tradition. We're going to do it in a shopping centre or a bowling alley or something next time." Those words ring rather hollow when I hear about the British parliamentary tradition.

The budget is the government's philosophy put into numbers. It is the government's programs put into numbers. The people, if they want to know what services are going to be provided to them, need to not only have access to the numbers but need to have the opportunity to have questions asked. The questions are asked by the opposition. That's our role. If the mover believes there needs to be a check and balance, that's what the Legislature exists for, yet there was no opportunity at this info-budget for the opposition to ask the questions that have come to us from our constituents. I'm still trying to merge in my mind the philosophy that we want everyone to know the facts versus the reality that we're seeing the facts continually blocked.

Again, we need only to go back a few days to the order in council. Orders in council, as I understand it, are public documents fairly quickly after being approved by the cabinet, yet an unprecedented order in council appropriated for this government \$36 billion. That's such a huge number, I think most of us have trouble actually sensing what it is. Thirty-six billion dollars was quietly appropriated and, for some very strange reason, out of all the orders in council that are made public, that particular item was lost. It's probably a coincidence, but the public needs to know. I'm sounding a little bit like the Enquirer, but like the Enquirer, the public needs to know and wants to know.

We have not seen, out of this government, any openness whatsoever. I'm sure the member on the government side from Ottawa West-Nepean, to his credit, has tried numerous times to get an inquiry held into some of the incidents in the Cornwall area. I believe it's the government side that voted against an inquiry—each and every time—that was requested by one of their own most credible members.

When we look at this bill, we see that it requires two thirds—and maybe that can be altered to 60% or 70%, but if it's any number over 50%, then it really doesn't give the Legislature the power to call an inquiry, because the Premier will be able to control the vote on his or her side of the House and there isn't an openness to it.

The member for Ottawa West-Nepean has to have experienced the frustration of trying to get an inquiry that hundreds, perhaps thousands, of people in his community—he has brought numerous petitions to this Legislature, yet the government was able to block any inquiry held into what is a most important issue for that part of the province and indeed for all of the province.

So we're really not giving any power to the Legislature with this. We're still going to have the government able to control.

I look at this bill and I apply what I believe is the ultimate test to it: if this bill were in place eight years

ago, would this Legislature have been able to trigger an inquiry into the death of Dudley George? The answer is no, it would not have been effective, because we would see again a government side choosing to vote to absolutely block it. We have seen request after request come from the public, from the media, from this side of the House. So would this bill have made life better and would this bill have provided justice to the Dudley George family?

The only reason I can think of to not hold an inquiry is cost. Certainly no one will want to support a frivolous request simply to run the bill up. But the purpose of an inquiry is to clear the air and lay the facts out. If there is no problem, if there is no evidence that would prove to be embarrassing or even worse for an individual, surely everyone would want to support the inquiry. If everyone involved in the Dudley George incident had behaved appropriately, if they had done everything they were supposed to do by the book, then they should want an inquiry. They should be in support of an inquiry, saying, "Hold an inquiry so that the air is cleared, so there is no longer this cloud hanging over me." Surely the government would want to deal with that and say, "I want to get rid of this cloud, this question, this uncertainty," and what is hurting their reputation. But the government very clearly is opposed.

I guess my belief is that this bill sounds good but it won't change one little thing. It won't change anything if there is not goodwill on the part of the government to actually believe in it and enforce it. We determine whether that goodwill exists by saying, "Let's look at history; let's look at eight years."

So I find it terribly ironic that the government puts forward a bill so that people can know the facts when it has spent eight years trying to block information getting to the public.

1020

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I am pleased to speak to this with Mr Prue, one of our Toronto members.

The concern around access to public inquiries has become even more profound over the course of the last eight years. Call after call for a public inquiry into the slaughter of Dudley George at Ipperwash has been suppressed by this Conservative government. My colleague Mr Guzzo, the member from Ottawa West-Nepean, who has shown incredible tenacity and courage in pursuing a public inquiry into the so-called Cornwall sex scandal, has found himself rebuffed by his own government.

In fact, we can go down the list. Most recently, Howard Hampton and the New Democrats called for a public inquiry into the provincial and federal handling of the SARS crisis. The government, of course, was unresponsive.

David Christopherson, our Hamilton member, pressed for a public inquiry around the Plastimet fire and the impact on firefighters and residents in the area of the Plastimet factory.

New Democrats called for a public inquiry into the abuse of young prisoners—the alleged abuse; fair enough—at Elgin-Middlesex Detention Centre.

New Democrats have called for a public inquiry into the Pickering nuclear plant overruns and delays.

New Democrats have called for a public inquiry into the Hydro culture of greed. You remember that? Remember the Hydro culture of greed? Remember Ms Clitheroe, the hand-picked Conservative appointee, Ms Clitheroe of the multi-hundred-thousand-dollar car allowance? Where I come from, you can buy a Chevy Impala for less than 30 grand, and that's with leather. Down at David Chev-Olds on Niagara Street, go see Cathy Robertson and she'll give you a Chevy Impala, fully loaded, leather, air, for less than 30 grand. Cathy Robertson down at David Chev-Olds, a unionized car dealership—CAW—down on Niagara Street in Welland, probably cuts a better deal than any other sales people at any other dealership: a Chevy Impala with leather, fully loaded, air, for less than 30 grand. But Ms Clitheroe, the hand-picked Tory appointee, needs a car allowance that would buy her a Rolls or a Bentley a year. Again, where Mr Bradley or I come from, you can buy three or four houses or you can pay the salaries of more than a few nurses anywhere in this province for the car allowance alone that the Tories granted Ms Clitheroe, their electricity appointee; never mind the multi-million-dollar salary and the multi-million-dollar golden handshake.

You see, the government wanted Hydro to be run as if it were a private corporation and to appreciate and experience all the efficiencies of a private corporation, which means these huge multi-million-dollar salaries and golden handshakes, plus all the perks, plus a sailboat of her own—and not some little dingy that you're taking out of Ray's Marina down in Port Colborne into Lake Erie to do some fishing; we're talking about a yacht.

New Democrats called for a public inquiry into the Hydro culture of greed this Conservative government created. Mr Prue will recall the call for a public inquiry into the Jeff Lyons scandal, another—dare I say it—Tory friend, Tory intimate, a Tory who's privy to—who is so intimate that the pillow talk is probably more significant than the written communiqués.

But let's take a look at this bill, because we find ourselves very frustrated in the frequent calls for public inquiries, all that more frequent during the course of the last eight years of Conservative rule here in Ontario.

We've joined Mr Guzzo in his call for a public inquiry into the atrocious, scandalous, evil, criminal prospect of a literal cover-up of child abuse, of sexual assaults on children by some of the most powerful people, it's alleged, in the community. Mr Guzzo's own government has not heeded his call. I've been at the end-of-session negotiations where all three House leaders participate, and in an effort to demonstrate, yes, co-operation, as we do when it's to the end of seeing private members' bills receive at least second reading, perhaps even third, I've prevailed upon the government House leader to include Mr Guzzo's resolutions and bills among the things to which New Democrats would give consent, because there isn't a fair-minded member of this Legislature who doesn't believe there should be a public inquiry into the obscene events in Cornwall.

This is not the first bill of its type that's been introduced, indeed by the same author, and New Democrats supported this author's Bill 12. Bill 12, quite frankly, warranted going to committee, perhaps for some fine-tuning; Bill 12, now dead because Mr Eves, the Premier, prorogued the House suddenly on the eve of the House being required to return, which of course led into a whole other scandalous series of weeks whereby the government delayed the return of the Legislature, presented a bogus budget at Magna, found themselves caught up in almost two weeks of government members debating the—colloquially referred to—contempt motion.

1030

Mind you, they defeated the motion, but do you know what, Speaker? They didn't defeat the ruling of the Speaker. In every Erskine and May, every Beauchesne, every parliamentary guide that's going to be published from this day forward, whether it's the 30th edition, the 31st, the 32nd, look up "Contempt" in the index and Speaker Gary Carr's ruling is going to be there—no two ways about it.

Interjection.

Mr Kormos: Oh, the vote does not detract from the ruling of the Speaker. If you don't understand anything about the last three and a half weeks, understand this: in every parliamentary reference book, both Canadian and British, and indeed from every other jurisdiction that uses the parliamentary system, under the index where it says "Contempt"—contempt with a capital C—there's going to be a page number with significant reference to the ruling of Speaker Gary Carr of the provincial Legislature. Sorry, it's fixed. Our Speaker Gary Carr, who is a wonderful person in his own right, and I've enjoyed his friendship—I think all of us have. The majority of the House voted for him. He has made his mark in parliamentary history.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): With a landmark decision.

Mr Kormos: As Mr Bradley says, with a landmark decision, which is how I just got him into Hansard during the course of my comments on this bill.

Bill 12 provided that any member of the Legislature—implied equality of members—can call for a public inquiry and that it had to be put to a vote within 60 days. Of course there is the floodgates prospect, that member after member will be calling for public inquiries into everything from soup to nuts, into everything from legitimate to less than legitimate. That's a problem. I acknowledge that. That's why I say that Bill 12 should have had the opportunity to be scrutinized by committee, because the fundamental principle is a good one.

Bill 12 didn't provide, for instance, for a period of debate. Bill 12 didn't provide for a manner of screening frivolous calls for public inquiries. But there could have been amendments to Bill 12 that did that. However, this bill requires—it's not that any single member can call for a public inquiry—that if two thirds of the members of the Legislature call for a public inquiry, then it must be put to a vote.

Depending upon the distribution of members among their various caucuses, there could be scenarios wherein the government's majority couldn't be used to knock that out of the ballpark. I suspect it's going to be some time before we experience huge majority governments in this province, but I could be wrong in that regard.

I find it regrettable that the member has set that standard at two thirds. Two thirds implies, let's say, an overwhelming majority. I wonder if perhaps 50% plus one, which would indicate there's some possibility or likelihood of success of the resolution, might not be a fairer number, and might also accommodate different configurations of the House in terms of where members sit with respect to the three caucuses, whether it's a majority or minority government and how large the majority is.

New Democrats, with some regret, will not support this bill for that reason. New Democrats would have much preferred Bill 12 having been presented again. I understand, as well, that the two-thirds concept is consistent with other areas around which this member has been advocating. I don't quarrel with that.

At the end of the day, though, we should also put this into the context of how independent, how capable any given member is of representing their constituents and speaking out. As a matter of fact, there are both Conservative platform policy and Liberal platform policy that talk about changing the rules to create free votes. There are no rules prohibiting free votes. No changes to the standing orders are required. All it requires is some guts and gonads on the part of individual members.

Think about it. All you've got to do is stand in your place and say no, if you believe your government is wrong. It has been done before. It will be done again. It doesn't require changes to the standing orders. It doesn't require changes to the rules. It simply requires courageous and conscientious members of the Legislative Assembly, women and men who are prepared to put the interests of the people ahead of their standing in the pecking order of their caucus, ahead of their pursuit of junkets and little, greasy jobs within the caucus that provide extra pay.

The serious fault in this bill is the two-thirds requirement. Bill 12 as it stood we would have welcomed, as we did, and would support and encourage it going to committee. It is with regret that that two thirds prevents us from supporting this bill today.

Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa West-Nepean): I welcome the opportunity to take part in this debate. I first of all wish to commend the member for London West for this bill, for bringing it forward and for allowing me the opportunity to speak to it.

I think there have been some interesting comments made already this morning by the previous speakers of the opposition, and I have to agree with some of them. But that does not diminish the importance of this legislation. We all come here and we all pay lip service to democracy and we all talk about the democratization of this House. I would be willing to admit that, having watched this House prior to coming here and in the eight

years I've been here, we have moved in the wrong direction. That has not happened. I don't see it happening in the federal House in Ottawa and I don't see it happening in many democracies around the world, particularly recently in the United States.

What we have here is the essence of democracy in the 21st century. I suggest that no member of this House would really be opposed to this bill. It is a step forward. The member for Niagara Centre made some good points with regard to the previous bill in comparing the two. I make no comment upon what has to be done in order to advance the envelope in matters of items such as this.

I come from a life in a courtroom, where you're constantly seeking the truth. I honestly thought when I came here that it would be a continuation of that effort to put the truth first. I have certainly experienced, as has been mentioned here, examples where the opposite has taken place: there has been a deliberate attempt to keep the truth from becoming part of the public record.

We all agree that an informed citizenry tends to promote responsible government, but unfortunately, in the electronic age and the 500-channel universe, voters receive a tremendous amount of information but receive very little power to seek resolution to the problems they face through their elected representatives. This is what a legislative-sponsored inquiry system would offer. It would offer empowerment of both the voters and those of us as tenants in these seats. This is an opportunity for each and every member of this Legislature to stand and deliver for their constituents, enhance the access to the information and force the release of that information.

The basic premise of this bill and of what we do here has to be that the public has a right to know. There are very, very few times when a government has the right to suppress information. Certainly we have seen it in times of war and we see it in issues of public security, but the public's right to know and to make an informed decision is the basis of our democracy and the backbone of our system.

1040

I ask you to compare some examples of what we have seen in this House and elsewhere. The tainted blood scandal: 7,000 Canadians lost their lives because of mistakes that were made at Tunney's Pasture in Ottawa, the federal Department of Health, and Queen's Park. Walkerton: seven people passed away. The Cornwall situation, to which two members have referred and that I have put forward on two occasions in private members' bills: we've had at least five suicides that we know of, possibly more. The member of that riding has been a strong supporter of those bills that he knows better than do I. Ipperwash: one member of the George family.

What do we know, what does the public know, about each of those four cases? Rather, what has been disclosed in each of those four cases? There are tremendous differences when you compare the four, tremendous differences when you compare what has been done in relation to the four—but that's a question for another day. The issue is public information and the right to know.

In the tainted blood scandal, Mr Justice Krever came down five years ago with an excellent report. It's prescribed reading for every person who wants to indulge himself of herself in government democracy, and an academic exercise in management as well, quite frankly. Surprisingly, I think five charges have been laid, five years after Mr Justice Krever, 10 years after the events. In Walkerton we've had some charges laid after the inquiry of Mr Justice O'Connor. But in Cornwall and Ipperwash, the message was always that we can't have an inquiry first because it will impair charges. We continually pointed to the Westray mine situation, where that did not happen, and now we have two examples here ourselves.

I say to the member for Prince Edward-Hastings, just to correct the matter, that my party did not turn on me on the question of Cornwall. In each case, those bills passed in this House on second reading, one by a 47 to 3 vote and the other by a 56 to 20 vote. As it was more accurately stated by the member from Niagara Centre, it was my government, but not my party. The majority of this side of the House voted with me on both of those.

I also want to state for the record that I tried yesterday and I will try again today to reintroduce a bill on Cornwall and also introduce a bill on Ipperwash, if I'm afforded the opportunity, and I hope to be debating one of them next week.

Mr Bradley: As the member for Niagara Centre has stated, I wish we were debating Bill 12 today rather than the present piece of legislation—Bill 29, I believe it's called. Anyway, Bill 12, the original bill, I thought was a stronger bill and one which was deserving of more support, because Bill 12 said the Public Inquiries Act would be amended to allow any member of the Legislative Assembly to propose a resolution to set up an inquiry into a matter that the act allows, a resolution that either designates the one or more persons who are to conduct the inquiry or requires the Speaker of the assembly or the Lieutenant Governor in Council to appoint them. The assembly would be required to vote on the resolution within 60 sessional days after it was proposed. I thought it was an excellent bill, and I think that would have gone a long way to empowering elected members of the Ontario Legislature to initiate inquiries.

Unfortunately—and I cannot read the member's mind, but I think he was trying to gather more support within the government caucus for this through the watering-down, if I may use that word, of the bill that now allows for a two-thirds majority of the members of the House to call for an inquiry or have signed a request that an inquiry be held.

I think it's a step forward, and I want to commend the member for that. I did prefer his original bill. I'm sure the Premier and others within the cabinet did not like his original bill, because, again, it would have given individual members even more power.

There obviously have been needs for public inquiries that have not been met. The one that comes to mind most often is the situation that happened at Ipperwash, where

Premier Harris, and subsequently Premier Eves, have consistently denied the opportunity for a public inquiry into that circumstance. I need not go into the details of it. My colleague Gerry Phillips, the member for Scarborough-Agincourt, has on numerous occasions asked Premiers and Attorneys General and called for an inquiry many editorialists have done so. I think it cries out for an inquiry. The government has blocked this on every occasion and refused to call the inquiry. If we had a situation in Bill 12, the original bill that the member brought before us, I think we might well have an inquiry into Ipperwash, but for two thirds of members it's much more difficult to achieve that.

I think an independent inquiry into everything surrounding the SARS situation would have been helpful simply to learn what happened, how it happened and how in the future we can improve in any way a situation that confronts the province. An independent inquiry would have been very useful in that regard. I don't think it would have been partisan or particularly vitriolic. It would have been very straightforward, it would have dealt with the issues and I think the province would have benefited, and not only our province; I remember speaking to the member for Perth-Middlesex the other evening and we think other provinces could learn from our experience in Ontario.

There are so many situations with what we used to call Ontario Hydro, now Hydro One, and the generating end of that. Both require inquiries into what has happened because most of this is behind closed doors. So often we are told we can't get this information because it is to be kept secret for business or other reasons. Another good example, I think, would be to have an inquiry into the sale of Highway 407. There are many provisions there. Unfortunately, there are secrecy provisions that are imposed upon this Legislature. They don't have to reveal information. I think it would be good for the public to know all aspects of what happened with the sale of Highway 407 just before the last provincial election so the government could balance its budget, of what I think many people have justifiably called a fire sale.

My friend the Liberal member for Hamilton East called for an inquiry into the Plastimet fire in Hamilton. A Walkerton inquiry was called after great public pressure, but it would have been nice to have the backup of—well, it was. My good friend the former Attorney General of the province, now the minister of lots of good things, enterprise and making the economy better, Jim Flaherty is in the House today. I want his constituents to know he's here today. I don't think we would have had an inquiry into Walkerton without a lot of public pressure. I'm glad it was called. By the way, I think the person chosen for the inquiry was a good choice. The province benefited from an inquiry that we in the opposition had called for.

I want to put all this in the context of the member and some of his initiatives in this House. What has clearly happened under the Harris and Eves administrations is that the role of the individually elected member has been

diminished considerably. We have seen rule changes in this House which simply allow ministers now to virtually dictate the amount of time that legislation will go through the House. The opposition has little opportunity to slow down or modify legislation because of the government majority and the new rules. Essentially, the government has been put into the hands of some backroom whiz kids who have more influence, even to this day, than elected members of this Legislature. Of course, they were the people who advised the Premier that he should have the budget of Ontario delivered at an auto parts training facility in Ontario instead of in the Legislature. I know that there are members, such as the member for Ottawa West-Nepean and, I suspect in his heart of hearts, the member for London West, who would have preferred that it be held in the Ontario Legislature. We see this happening on an ongoing basis.

I would like to see an inquiry into the government advertising that is going on at the present time, millions upon millions of dollars being spent on huge signs on the highway, with the Premier's name on it and a political message, and they're not even sites of construction. Television commercials, radio commercials, full-page ads in newspapers, inserts in newspapers, pamphlets arriving at the house day after day: that would be the subject of a good inquiry. It would not happen if two thirds of the members were required to have such an inquiry.

1050

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): I appreciate the opportunity this morning to address some of my concerns and some of my endorsements for this bill. I'd like to start off with the author of the bill, the member for London West. I've sat beside him for quite a while now, and you get to know a little bit about a person when you're sitting beside them. The member for London West is hard-working and dedicated and he has a very keen mind. He's a lawyer. I can recall sitting beside a member, Doug Rollins. I enjoyed his company and learned a great deal from him. I also sat beside David Tilson. David was a lawyer as well. I just wanted to say that I've expressed my opinion to both Mr Tilson and Mr Wood that just because they're lawyers, I've never held that against them at all. The member for London West has a great sense of right and wrong, and democracy and freedom, and what this chamber and this Legislative Assembly are about and should be about. This bill that he's brought to us this morning indicates his dedication toward democracy.

I take with interest some of the comments of the other people who have addressed this bill this morning. I was particularly listening to the member for Prince Edward-Hastings when he was talking about free votes. Yes, private members' business is a time for free votes. He thinks there should be others. I can remember that the last time there was going to be, supposedly, a free vote in this House, his caucus, to a person, along with the NDP, to a person, stood up in unanimity. I thought that was an interesting concept of a free vote.

I listened intently to the member for Niagara Centre. He as well is a lawyer and has a keen mind. When he gets away from partisan politics he can be a very interesting and engaging individual, and he certainly brings a different point of view to a lot of issues. His colleague the member for Trinity-Spadina, I can recall with a little bit of mirth, not so very long ago was commenting on the budget being released at Magna in Brampton, and referring to Frank Stronach as such a great buddy of the government of Ontario, and indeed I hope he is. I hope he has changed, because I can recall that in 1988 the same man ran as a Liberal. It's intriguing how different members bring different issues to it.

I wanted to say that the member for London West feels and deeply believes that this bill is part of democracy, and I can't argue or disagree with him in that at all. I think there are so many pressing issues. We could have had inquiries, perhaps, and some of them have mentioned some recent ones. I think back to the Hagersville fire. I think back to the Patti Starr affair. I don't remember the public inquiries for those, so I don't intend to make any apologies for the decisions that have been made by the executive council in calling inquiries in this province.

With that, I have a great deal of gratitude in being able to speak toward this bill and being able to represent the people of Perth-Middlesex in saying that I agree wholeheartedly with it and I will be voting in favour of it.

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre): Like the previous speakers, I support the bill. I think the member from London West should be congratulated for bringing it forward. I'm not going to say I'm totally without reservations on it. I believe that opposition parties of all stripes, whatever government there is in this place, make an attempt to embarrass the government from time to time. That's the nature of politics. There are calls for inquiries on a fairly regular basis, and I can see that it could be potentially embarrassing to any government. On the other hand, the requirement built into the bill that at least two thirds of the members sign on to any request for a public inquiry should in itself be protection. A simple majority would, I think, encourage abuse, whereas if you get two thirds of the members of this place to sign on to a request for a public inquiry into any issue, then that should be adequate.

I also believe this ties in quite neatly with what the Premier has stated on occasion: that he would like to see more democratization in this place, that he would like to see more representation by the members in this place of their constituents. That cannot be achieved under the present system.

So I would like to say that the member from London West should be congratulated. I don't believe this is a political bill. There is no partisanship expressed, although there was a little bit on the opposition benches, but that's to be expected. I think we can accept that.

The Acting Speaker: The member for London West has two minutes to reply.

Mr Wood: I'd like to thank all the members who participated in the debate. I'd like to deal briefly with two

concerns that were expressed, and then deal in a little more detail with the major concern that appears to have been expressed. I'm going to go right into my two minutes.

A couple of concerns were expressed that this gives no power to the Legislature because the members will simply follow the government line and not be prepared to support any inquiry the government is not prepared to support. That, of course, can happen. This bill cannot give a sense of responsibility to any MPPs. If they want to follow the government line and not do what they think is right for the province, there's nothing the law or the rules can do about that. I have confidence in the MPPs. I think they're all here to do the right thing, and I think they will try to do the right thing.

Some specific instances were mentioned where members thought an inquiry should have been held when it wasn't. Certainly those points of view are legitimate. My response to that is that this mechanism gives a greater chance for an inquiry to be held than we have now, so I would encourage members who have concerns to consider supporting the bill.

The main and major concern I heard expressed was the issue of the two-thirds petition. The reason for that is that I see the calling of inquiries as primarily an executive function. I see a role for the Legislature as a check and balance on the decision that's made by the cabinet. So I think it should more than a simple majority. Preference was expressed by some of the members for Bill 12 over this bill. The principle of both bills in my mind is the same: either you're for some MPP input into whether or not an inquiry is going to be held or you're not. I would invite members to consider whether or not they support that principle, and if they do support that principle, I would invite them to support this bill.

There is an opportunity to move this issue forward. I'm going to ask that this bill go to committee if it's passed. I invite members to support the principle of the bill.

The Acting Speaker: This completes the time allocated for debate on ballot item number 7. I will place the question at 12 o'clock noon.

1100

ONTARIO WATER RESOURCES
AMENDMENT ACT
(WATER SOURCE PROTECTION), 2003
LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LES RESSOURCES EN EAU
DE L'ONTARIO
(PROTECTION DES SOURCES
D'ALIMENTATION EN EAU)

Mrs Dombrowsky moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 35, An Act to amend the Ontario Water Resources Act with respect to water source protection / Projet de loi 35, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les ressources en eau de

l'Ontario en ce qui concerne la protection des sources d'alimentation en eau.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): The member has up to 10 minutes for her presentation.

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): I'm delighted that I—actually, I guess it is with some mixed emotions that I stand in the Legislature this morning to speak to a private member's bill. This is the third time I've introduced this bill in the Legislature, and it's one that I feel very strongly about. I think it's important for the people of Ontario because it deals with something we all need every day, each and every one of us, and that is water.

The bill speaks particularly to water source protection. It very simply puts in legislation that when the Ministry of the Environment considers permits to take water in any and every community in the province, it must do three things: it must notify municipalities; it must notify conservation authorities; and, finally, and I think most importantly, it must consider its own statement of environmental values when considering permits to take water.

I want to talk briefly about the history of this bill, how it is that it has come to pass and how it is that I've presented it three times in the Legislature. There was a situation in my own riding where residents in the community of Centre Hastings were shocked indeed to find out that a permit to take water had been granted for a significant amount of water to be removed from Rodden Creek. Rodden Creek is a very important creek in the community because it feeds into the community of Stirling, and many farms rely on that water source. They were quite alarmed when they heard there was a permit to take water granted for the purpose of removing water to have it bottled. They were worried about the impact that was going to have on the water source that they relied on for their crops, to feed their animals and then on into the community of Stirling, where it is a significant feature in that community as well.

As we came to do a little research on the issue, it was brought to our attention that the way the legislation is written is that communities and conservation authorities "may," not "shall," be notified. We think it is absolutely essential that communities, municipalities and conservation authorities—conservation authorities being those groups who have the responsibility to manage watersheds—should have this information. As the bill evolved, we also included that the ministry must consider its own statement of environmental values.

The reason that particular part has been placed in the bill is that in the community of Perth there is a very controversial permit to take water that has been granted in that area. It was made public that a business, OMYA, was granted a permit to take water from the Tay River for an amount of 1.5 million litres of water a day. This is an alarmingly large amount for the people in that community, particularly people who have interests in the Tay River. When I say "interests," they may use it as a water source or it may be flowing through the community. There was a very real concern that by removing that

amount of water, it would have an impact on the water levels and also that that would have—pardon the pun—a ripple effect into Bob's Lake, which is the headwater of the Tay River, which is located in my riding.

The other part of that particular permit is that over a period of time the amount of water that will be removed from the river will increase to 4.5 million litres of water a day. People in the community felt that was just totally unreasonable and that in fact the ministry had not considered its own statement of environmental values, which very clearly state that when considering permits to take water, it would be essential that they appreciate the ecosystem impact that such a removal would have.

The ministry was challenged by members of the community on this permit. During the challenge it was quite interesting that the ministry argued in its defence that it did not have to consider the statement of environmental values because it was not legislated. This bill will legislate that the ministry must consider its statement of environmental values when considering permits to take water.

We then had the Walkerton Inquiry and the report from Mr Justice Dennis O'Connor, which was very comprehensive and which did speak to water source protection. It was interesting as well that the government, while it did implement some of the recommendations, had up until as recently as last fall done absolutely nothing to implement any regulations around water source protection. This is something that is cited by the Canadian Environmental Law Association where they wrote in April of this year that CELA had previously been concerned that while they saw "the government proceed with various recommendations from the Walkerton Inquiry, including consultations on the then proposed Safe Drinking Water Act and the then proposed sustainable water and sewer systems legislation," they had not seen "any response on the recommendations concerning water source protection."

However, later on last year in November, the government did undertake an advisory committee. CELA sat on this committee. The goal of the committee was to establish a framework which outlines accountability roles and responsibilities for water source protection.

At the present time, there are proposed regulations on the EBR Web site. In the first two statements that are contained in this bill, the regulations would require that the ministry must contact municipalities, conservation authorities and abutting landowners. However, the regulations, I would suggest, are very unclear about any commitment to the statement of environmental values and that it must consider those.

I'm sure we will hear from government members that this bill is redundant, that it's going to be in regulations in the very near future, but what I'm saying here this morning is that it is absolutely essential that this bill is passed. As recently as yesterday we have seen what can happen to government regulations. They can be amended, they can be added to, they can be taken away and no one has any opportunity to make any comment on that.

We in the Liberal Party are absolutely committed to water source protection. In our platform document, *Growing Strong Communities*, Dalton McGuinty has committed, unlike the Harris-Eves government, to implement every recommendation of the Walkerton Inquiry. We will, we are committed, we are prepared to put in legislation that, with regard to permits to take water, municipalities must be notified, conservation authorities must be notified and that the statement of environmental values for the Ministry of the Environment must be considered when permits to take water are considered by the Ministry of the Environment. It's not a matter of leaving it to regulation, which may or may not be changed; we believe this is so important that it must be enshrined in law.

The Canadian Environmental Law Association indicated in its release on April 23, 2003, that it will be writing to the government and to each political party asking each to commit to adopt the framework, which would be the regulation in its entirety, as part of any party platform. It very much wants to see a commitment to water source protection.

I would say that we are prepared, on this side of the House, to go one better than what's proposed even in the framework. We are prepared to make this the law in the province, not simply part of a regulation that may or not be changed at one point in the future. Certainly, given the record of this government and how it deals with and manages regulations, I don't think it's anything we want to leave at that status. It requires a legislative solution. That is what is being proposed here this morning.

1110

Hon Doug Galt (Minister without Portfolio): I first want to thank the member for introducing an Act to amend the Ontario Water Resources Act with respect to water source protection.

I want to assure everyone in this Legislature that we share the member's belief in the need to protect the source waters that are so important to the people of Ontario. Our government recognizes the need to protect water at every step, from source to tap. That's why we've developed the most comprehensive clean water strategy in the history of our province. Our strategy is based on the premise that well-protected water is absolutely fundamental to the high quality of life we enjoy in Ontario.

We are taking action on many fronts to protect Ontario's water supplies and ensure those supplies are indeed sustainable. Our efforts include proceeding quickly to implement changes and address recent concerns about the permit to take water program. We're always open to new ways to improve the effectiveness of our programs.

However, the private member's bill introduced today—an Act to amend the Ontario Water Resources Act with respect to water source protection—is not necessary because everything in it is being addressed by our work to improve the permit to take water program.

Before I talk about our program in more detail, I want to put it into context by outlining some of the unprecedented actions we've taken to ensure that Ontarians

have access to the best drinking water in the world. In August 2000 we introduced Operation Clean Water, highlighted by the drinking water protection regulation, which most of you will know as regulation 459. The regulation gave Ontario's first-ever legally enforceable standards for drinking water quality, as well as strict requirements for testing, treatment and reporting. We also implemented annual inspection of all municipal water facilities to ensure compliance with the regulation.

These efforts were complemented in other areas as we worked to create a comprehensive strategy that protects drinking water, both at the source and at the tap. With the release of Commissioner Dennis O'Connor's report of the Walkerton Inquiry, we gained a new focus in our efforts. Commissioner O'Connor's report amounts to a new vision of how we can provide stronger, more integrated protections for Ontario's drinking water. The Ontario government embraces O'Connor's vision, and we are committed to implementing all of the 120 recommendations made by the commission.

The creation of a Safe Drinking Water Act is one of his key recommendations. The act represents a major step forward in water system management and accountability. It provides the legislative authority to implement 50 of the 93 recommendations made in part two of Commissioner O'Connor's report. The Safe Drinking Water Act builds on our existing policies and practices, like the drinking water protection regulation and our tough inspection regime. These will be rolled into the new act over time.

The Safe Drinking Water Act was passed in December 2002, and we're now working on a series of attendant regulations that will (1) make Ontario the first province with authority to require mandatory licensing and accreditation of laboratories that perform drinking water testing; (2) require the establishment of a standards advisory council, and provide authority to set standards for drinking water treatment, distribution, quality and testing; (3) require the certification of all drinking water system operators, including those operators who have been grandparented under the old certification regime; (4) require an owner's licence for municipal drinking water systems; (5) hold municipalities with oversight functions to a statutory standard of care; and (6) provide the Ontario government with the authority to strengthen compliance and enforcement provisions.

As well, a new position of chief water inspector has been created. This symbolizes an important step toward increased accountability.

When the necessary regulations are in place, the Safe Drinking Water Act will provide Ontario with the strongest-ever safeguards to protect the water that comes out of our taps.

Another important piece of legislation I should mention at this point is the Sustainable Water and Sewage Systems Act. The purpose of this act is self-evident. It is meant to ensure that we have effective water and sewage services protecting our health, not just today or for the foreseeable future but for generations to come.

I would now like to turn to the source protection component of our integrated clean water strategy.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Galt: Commissioner O'Connor made 22 recommendations with respect to source protection, and if the member for Kingston and the Islands would just listen, I'll continue with my presentation. I hope I'm not interrupting him too much.

We have been working diligently to ensure that we come up with actions that will best meet those recommendations. Last November we announced the creation of the advisory committee on watershed-based source protection. The committee afforded us an opportunity to hear from a wide range of interests and backgrounds involved in the protection of water sources. The final report was released on April 21 of this year.

The advisory committee on watershed-based source protection has provided us with a number of excellent recommendations on ways to protect the sources of our drinking water in accordance with the work of Commissioner O'Connor. Among other things the advisory committee report is calling on the provincial government to do—I'm sure the member for Kingston and the Islands will be interested in all of these points: (1) carry out further consultation on how best to put source protection into place and how to pay for it; (2) establish a committee of technical experts to develop a process for identifying and managing threats to drinking water sources; and (3) introduce legislation for watershed-based source protection. The advisory committee provided valuable advice on what this legislation should contain.

We are reviewing these recommendations very carefully and over the next few months the public will have the opportunity to do the same.

I think you can see from this presentation what our government is doing to ensure we have the safest possible water in Ontario. You will see that this bill being brought forward by the member from Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington is indeed redundant.

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): I described a bill an hour ago as being an amazing bill, and this to me is also an amazing bill. It's amazing from the viewpoint that the member for Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington has fought fiercely for four years to try to get these changes. The first time and the second time she introduced the bill, this government voted against it and said, "It's redundant. We don't need to do it." Now we're hearing, "Well, we're actually starting to do it and we're going to do it by regulation." If it was redundant before, why the changes now? The reality is that this government has not addressed the issues in the bill this member has put forward.

Secondly, where they are starting to make some moves to address the bill, they're doing it by regulation rather than in the bill itself. We have learned the hard way with this government that by regulation, they're doing business behind closed doors. Things are quietly changed and modified, with no public consultation and no public knowledge of it.

Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberals believe this needs to be enshrined as a basic principle, that we are going to protect our water source. All the energies this government wants to put into cleaning water fail to address the real issue; that we need to stop polluting. We believed for years in Ontario that we had unlimited supplies of clean water. We now know better than that. This is not rocket science, folks. We know we need to protect the water. This bill addresses some of the commitments. It says that one of the basic responsibilities of government is to protect our drinking water. "After seven years of neglect, it is time to get it right," says Dalton McGuinty, and he could not be more right on this issue.

1120

We believe, as Liberals, that we need to implement every recommendation—every recommendation—of the Walkerton Inquiry, as soon as possible. It is unbelievable to me that we are stalling on this. For protecting our groundwater, there are some very basic principles that this government violates. When we have permits come forward for things such as dump expansions, this government is, without any reservation, taking and scoping the range of the environmental assessment—"scoping" meaning they're taking it and reducing it to make it fast and easy for the applicant to get it through. I strongly believe that if the proposal presents no risk and no hazard to our groundwater, then there is no problem with going through the full environmental assessment. It may cost a little more money, but surely we've learned from Walkerton that it is more important to do it right than to do it cheaply. Cheap has cost lives; cheap has been proven—I guess it's fair to say this government knows the cost of everything and the value of nothing. We've seen that demonstrated with their regard for the environment.

As a rural resident, for the people who live in rural areas, water is the very essence of life. It makes their farm viable or not. It means they can live on a particular property or not. Everything that every rural resident cherishes falls apart if they have no groundwater or if their groundwater is polluted. They deserve to know if there's going to be anything that could potentially affect their groundwater supply. For that reason, I strongly support the member for Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington on her bill that will require municipalities to be told. I always believe that if you're going to do something right, it will stand daylight; it will stand the public knowing about it. It needs to be presented in public. Municipalities that are local-council-represented, elected to represent the people in that particular community, need to know if there is a potential of something that would adversely affect the residents of that community, the industry in that community, their very lifeblood.

At the moment, the process is that individuals or municipalities or whoever have to keep checking on a regular basis—meaning daily—to see if there is any posting on the EBR, that there may be a water-taking permit or there may be something proposed. Surely we need to respect the municipal people. Surely we need to advise

them: "Here is an application that would adversely affect you." I've said it before and I'll say it again: this isn't rocket science. I suspect we could have almost anyone look at this and say, "Why wouldn't you tell? Why does it have to be kept a secret?" I don't hear an answer on that. This is a government that, although they talk about Red Tape Commission and they want to reduce it, in fact has created more obstacles for citizens to get access to information from the government. They have put up all kinds of barriers and hoops for people to jump through to find out what's going on in their community. I believe if this government truly wanted to protect groundwater and truly wanted to do the right thing, they would do second and third reading on this bill today and get it passed, because it has the potential to greatly improve the quality of life for Ontario.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I think I'll start, because I might forget in my 15 minutes here, by telling people about Howard Hampton's and the NDP's Public Power platform for the election that's coming up any day now.

Interjections.

Ms Churley: No props. It's www.publicpower.ca. Within this document, there is—

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): Speak to the bill.

Ms Churley: The Liberals are getting nervous there.

In this document, there are practical solutions for clean air and water. I urge people to take a look at the Web site or, if they don't have access, to give us a call or e-mail us and we will get the information to them.

I know that after the tragic events in Walkerton—and we are, by the way, within the time frame of the third anniversary of the deaths and illnesses in Walkerton. As we all know, all of us agree that that was a huge wake-up call to all of us—the legislators, the municipal councillors, everybody, the public—to take better care with our water that is life-giving and -sustaining and it can kill. That was quite a wake-up call for us, although, as you will recall, at some time before Walkerton happened—and I'm sure Mr Bradley will remember this—there was a death in I believe Barrie. Somebody was drinking water and he got cryptosporidium and died. I remember at that time the NDP raised concerns, and I asked questions in the House expressing concern and alarm, about what was happening after the major cuts to the Ministry of the Environment and the downloadings, and then of course the privatization of the labs. So instead of the government rallying and saying, "We'd better take a better look and perhaps beef up what we have in the Ministry of the Environment," after that death in Barrie, they went in the opposite direction and said, "Don't worry. Everything's OK." In fact it was some time after this that the tragic events happened in Walkerton.

I see a parallel in the Minister of Agriculture's answer yesterday to the question of my leader, Howard Hampton, on meat inspectors. It was alarming in that the Minister of Agriculture said very similar things in answer

to that question about so many meat inspectors being laid off. I believe there are only eight full-time meat inspectors now. The government said, "Don't worry. Everything's OK," and talked about what a wonderful job they're doing. That was also said when they started to be warned about problems with the cutbacks, down-loading and privatization before Walkerton happened: "Don't worry. It's perfect. We're doing a better job than ever before."

So I would say to the government that it's important to listen to these warnings from the opposition or from whoever else has some kind of expertise and knowledge about what's going on. That's why I want to say to Ms Dombrowsky today that I support her bill. I know she's made several attempts to get this passed. It's a small piece of a big, major problem, a big puzzle that Justice O'Connor made recommendations on some time ago: what had to be done to create a regulatory regime that fully protects our water from source to tap.

The bill before us today does some of that. I would argue that to some extent it reiterates some ideas that are already in place, and that's called the Environmental Bill of Rights, which the NDP brought in, I believe, when we were in government, with all-party support.

Section 11 states that, "The minister shall take every reasonable step to ensure that the ministry statement of environmental values is considered whenever decisions that might significantly affect the environment are made in the ministry." It also says in sections 5 and 6 that the ministry shall set up an environmental registry for the purposes of posting proposals for things such as permits to take water, and that citizens and groups shall have a period of 30 days. So those things are already part of the law.

Given the problem around water-taking these days, and I want to refer specifically to a recent decision by the Minister of the Environment when the minister overturned an Environmental Review Tribunal decision to allow a Swiss multinational company to take massive amounts of water from the Tay River, we were appalled and actually quite surprised that the minister did it. I didn't think he would after the recommendations from Justice O'Connor, because that was one of the key recommendations, and the government chose to ignore it. It was a test of the government, and the people in the area felt really betrayed because they participated in the so-called public process. Then, when they won the day originally, the company appealed to the minister, who caved in to them.

I'm happy to see this bill before us today. I would say to the government that it's a small piece of a bigger puzzle and they should be supporting it. There's no reason in the world that they shouldn't be doing that. In fact, on the eve of the third anniversary of the tragedy in Walkerton—and I must say to all members that some of the people in Walkerton became good friends of mine. I visited Walkerton throughout that whole ordeal. I spent a lot of time there and I talked to some of the people in Walkerton on a regular basis. What I'm finding, and I'm

sure you're not surprised to hear this, is that there are people in Walkerton who are still sick and who will be sick for the rest of their lives. There are children who will have to have kidney transplants. When you think about the ongoing tragedy to that community, in people's lives and health, it's just astounding.

1130

That's why, three years later I note that there was nothing in this government's platform this time. I referred to that on the day it was released, when they did it in little go-karts, that their Road Ahead is the road back to Walkerton, full circle. In fact, as some of them came riding out through paper in a little go-kart, I noted, what do go-karts do? They bump around all over the place but they go full circle. It's not the Road Ahead; it's the road full circle back to Walkerton. More tax cuts, the mortgage interest deductibility, which even the right and left analysts say won't work and is not necessary, the money for private schools: all of those things will either put the public purse and the government in the hole—they've got a law they've already broken that says they can't do that. Then, with the combination of these things they're promising, should they be re-elected, it would lead to more massive service cuts; we would see even more cuts at the Ministry of the Environment, in our health care system, in our schools etc. That's why it's not the Road Ahead; it's the road moving full circle, back to Walkerton.

It's important that we have these opportunities to debate these kinds of bills today and throughout the next little while, unless the election is called. Yesterday I re-introduced my Ontario Drinking Water Source Protection Act because the government has done nothing on that. They've done some consultations, but we still don't see anything. Justice O'Connor made it very clear that that was the lynchpin, to make sure Ontario's drinking water is protected.

We have a Safe Drinking Water Act. I'll remind members of the House that I came forward with the original Safe Drinking Water Act right after the tragedy in Walkerton and urged and urged, with the support of the Liberals, the government to pass that bill, and it never did. Eventually, after Justice O'Connor came out with his recommendations, they passed one of their own, although it's very different, because there's nothing about source protection, which there was in my bill. Within their bill we're still left without that.

I want to remind the Legislature as well that I introduced yesterday, as well as the Ontario Drinking Water Source Protection Act—

Mr Gerretsen: Oh, talk about this bill.

Ms Churley: Well, it's related—the No Hog Factories Act. What that does, because this relates again to protecting our water and keeping our water clean, is it prohibits large hog farms, subject to the ability of the Lieutenant Governor in Council to make exemptions where it's appropriate to do so. Where I say it's appropriate to do so in this bill is, "The Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations exempting

any person from complying with section 2 if"—and this is the key point—"the Lieutenant Governor in Council is satisfied that Ontario legislation is in force that protects sources of drinking water from contamination that may be caused by the factory hog farm."

We all know on all sides of this House the problems that are out there right now across the province, and in the Minister of Agriculture's own riding, Huron. I get lots and lots of e-mails and letters from people all across the province saying there needs to be some legislation in place to curtail the growth of these huge pig farms in areas that are environmentally sensitive.

Those are two bills that I know my Liberal friends, as I support the Liberal bill before us today, and I hope the government will support it—these are things, after what happened in Walkerton, we should all be working on together to try to put all these pieces of the puzzle together, and what we have before us today is indeed a piece of that puzzle.

I listened to Mr Galt talk about why it wasn't necessary and his glib answer that, "We're doing everything. We're perfect. We've got it all under control. Don't worry. We don't need your help." It's the same old stuff that we've been hearing over and over again.

In the few minutes I've got left, I'm going to remind the government and the public why we need to be passing such legislation.

As Justice O'Connor said, "A strong source protection program offers a wide variety of benefits. It lowers risk-cost effectively, because keeping contaminants out of drinking water sources is an efficient way of keeping them out of the drinking water."

So the government should pass my source protection act now. It lays out the framework to do that. There's no need to wait.

But as we speak here today about the situation on the anniversary of Walkerton—that's the third anniversary—we have a situation where we have all kinds of municipalities whose water systems are out of compliance. We have money that the government—let's see; how much is it? In the 2002-03 budget, the government promised to spend \$174 million on water projects in Ontario, almost all of that badly needed money for municipal water projects. In the most recent budget, they admit that they only spent a third of that amount. They underspent by \$110 million on municipal water projects, at a time when we have boil-water orders all across this province.

Over the last two years, they failed to invest in the crumbling infrastructure in this province and failed to spend over \$200 million on water. I fail to understand how they can justify that when we know that there are many, many boil-water orders across this province as we speak.

I stand in support of this bill before us today. I would urge the government to also, as we're determining support for this bill, take a look at the two bills that I brought forward yesterday. Of course, I reintroduced the source protection act. I introduced it in the last session, and it died on the order paper when the government

prorogued the House. I just brought forward the new piece of legislation on limiting big pig farms until a proper source protection act is in place. That's what I urge the government to do.

A report in September of last year, as I said, shows that over 40% of our municipal water systems are out of compliance. The government says that's down from 60% last year, and that they're doing well. It's still 40% out of compliance. We would all agree that that's not acceptable on this third anniversary of the Walkerton Inquiry.

I would urge the government members to support this bill today, and to, furthermore, agree to—I'll be asking later for third reading on the two bills that I presented yesterday, that also will go a long way toward protecting our drinking water in this province.

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): It's my pleasure to join in the debate today with regard to an Act to amend the Ontario Resources Act with respect to water source protection. Like my colleague, I share the member's belief in the need to protect the source waters that are so important to the people of Ontario.

Before I get into my prepared speech, I'd like to talk a bit about some of the things going on. As every day goes by, we're adding to our knowledge of source water across this province. Yesterday's Sudbury Star reads:

"The Ministry of the Environment has commissioned a \$1-million study of groundwater in five northern Ontario communities, including Markstay-Warren, just east of Sudbury.

"The project involves the analysis of water sources and the integration of the results into a cohesive set of statistical and visual data. This includes both technical reports and extensive mapping....

"This is just one of a series of projects that started in August of 2001. Five or six have been announced in the last month, and more are expected.

"These studies have been commissioned as part of Ontario's Operation Clean Water, part of the provincial government's plan for managing provincial resources.

"At the end of the studies, there will be a comprehensive understanding of Ontario's aquifers....

"A benefit to residents is that the quantity and quality of their water can be gauged closely for years to come. This will allow communities to make more informed decisions in municipal planning."

That's going on as we speak.

1140

An April 14 announcement: "Thirty-two more Ontario communities will have better information to protect their drinking water resources thanks to the Ernie Eves government's additional \$5-million investment in local groundwater studies, Environment Minister Chris Stockwell announced....

"The grants for Ontario communities and conservation authorities build on the largest single investment in groundwater resources in the province's history. Since 2000, the Ontario government has invested \$19.3 million in local groundwater studies to help gather valuable information on the province's groundwater resources."

So we're adding to our knowledge of source waters all the time.

In my riding of Kearney, phase two of a project is underway studying the headwaters in the Magnetawan River system, right on the border of Algonquin Park. It's certainly a critical study going on there. That project will assess the feasibility and means for protection of the surface and groundwater quality in the headwater areas of the Magnetawan River, and flows to the Big East River, in support of environmentally sound growth and economical development. So as we speak, a lot is going on.

I'd like to speak for a second to the member of Toronto-Danforth talking about monies not flowing within the current budget year. I'd like to point out that there are due processes that have to be followed. I'm sure she would be the first one to say we should follow the current environmental assessment process. I know I'm working with the many municipalities in my riding as they work to improve their water systems day by day.

There was mention made by Mr Galt of the advisory committee report that came out April 21. The chair of that committee was Bill Calvert, a very competent chair and the former CAO of the district of Muskoka. He was the chair of the advisory committee on watershed-based source protection.

Before discussing those actions, I want to give some background on the permits to take water program. I want to be very clear that through our permits to take water program, the Ontario government has spared no effort to ensure that permits are subject to comprehensive review and strict controls. These controls include expiry periods and, where appropriate, environmental monitoring. We have the Ontario low water response plan in place to deal with drought conditions in Ontario watersheds. As members of the House are aware, permits to take water fall under the provisions of the Ontario Water Resource Act, the OWRA, and decisions on granting permits and the specific conditions to be imposed on permits are made on the basis of sustainability. The goal is to ensure that new water-takings do not interfere with existing groundwater users or uses.

Another guiding concept is fair sharing of the resource. The OWRA and attendant regulations authorize a ministry director appointed under the legislation to issue permits to proponents for most types of surface and groundwater takings for quantities over 50,000 litres per day. There are some exceptions to that rule.

I know I'm going to run out of time, so I'm going move on to talk about some announcements that came out on April 21, that I referred to earlier. Notice was given of two key actions that we're taking to further strengthen our source water protection.

First, a six-month moratorium was announced on permits to take water in two of southern Ontario's most environmentally sensitive areas: the Oak Ridges moraine and the Niagara Escarpment. The six-month moratorium took effect on March 1 of this year and is applicable for beverage manufacturing, including bottled water oper-

ations; fruit and vegetable canning and pickling; ready-mix concrete manufacturing; and other manufacturing and production of goods that contain water that is taken under a permit to take water. The moratorium takes the spirit of the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act, 2002, and the Niagara Escarpment Act a step further by protecting local resources over the short term while new initiatives are being developed.

Second, along with the six-month moratorium, we announced the posting of amendments to regulation 285/99, the water-taking and transfer regulation, for public comment. Generally speaking, the announcement increases the accountability of permit holders and those applying for permits, requiring the public sharing of information on both new and revised permits.

In developing the amendments, we carefully reviewed recommendations from a number of key stakeholders, including the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, the Environmental Commissioner and the Environmental Review Tribunal.

The amendments to the regulation will require permit applicants to notify municipalities, conservation authorities and adjacent landowners about proposed water takings, require reporting of water use by permit holders, and define potential impacts that will be considered when reviewing permit applications.

The Ministry of the Environment will also consult on other program improvements that will establish a service cost recovery fee structure for permit applications.

These proposed changes will ensure that Ontario continues to be among the leading jurisdictions in North America when it comes to the protection of the sources of drinking water.

It is clear that the Ernie Eves government takes very seriously its responsibility to ensure that Ontario has, and enforces, the best drinking water protection rules in the world. These rules include provisions to ensure that permits to take water are issued in such a way as to protect and ensure the sustainability of our precious water resources.

As I and my colleague indicated earlier, we are always open to any new ideas that will strengthen our safeguards. However, An Act to amend the Ontario Water Resources Act with respect to water source protection does not add anything to the process that we have in place. We do, however, appreciate the concerns of the member and I would invite her and everyone with an interest in this issue to work with the government as we continue to build on the strength of Ontario's permit to take water program.

Mr Gerretsen: It's very disappointing to listen to the government members here today. Instead of talking about the private member's bill that has been brought forward, which really wants to bring the highest standards to the drinking water situation here in Ontario, they talk about everything else.

The first point I want to make is, why don't you implement all of Justice O'Connor's recommendations with respect to Walkerton? The report's been out for more than a year now. You know darned well you haven't

implemented all of the recommendations yet. If you did, we'd go a long way to resolving the source water situation here in Ontario.

Secondly, if you really want to be proactive—it's a very simple bill—why don't you just give true meaning to the statement of environmental values that the ministry has by putting it into legislation? You know darned well what happened with this Tay water situation up in the Perth area. There was a hearing before the Environmental Review Tribunal—I think it was a 30-day hearing—and then after the hearing was done, the minister overturned the tribunal's decision because of new information the minister had. That new information, if there really was any new information, surely should have gone back to the tribunal so the tribunal could make a decision taking all the information into account, including the so-called new information. That's the real problem here.

I take the position that the water sources we have, the water we have in our streams and the underground sources, are a precious commodity and a resource that belongs to each and every Ontarian, in exactly the same way that the coal that's underground and the forestry that's out there—you know, we do things to protect those industries. Why don't we do exactly the same thing with water? We should be even more vigilant with water since we all need it on a day-to-day basis for our ongoing existence.

The bill that the member proposes here is very simple. As I've already stated, one is to include the statement of environmental values as part of legislation. Two, make sure that when notice of an application to take water out of our streams or out of our underground water system is given, municipalities and conservation authorities in those particular areas be notified. They shouldn't be placed in the position where they in effect have to watch the Net on a day-to-day basis to see if an application has been made. What could be more reasonable than that? Notify them and give them 30 days, as the member is suggesting in the legislation, to make a response to the ministry. That surely is the least we can expect in a situation like this.

1150

Also, make it mandatory that the director take the various pieces of information they get from the municipality and from the conservation authority into account. You know as well as I do that currently the regulation states that the MOE director "may" ensure that government authorities are notified, and they "may" consult and they "may" take whatever they say into consideration. Well, in today's world, that just isn't good enough. In light of what happened in Walkerton, it isn't good enough. It should be mandatory. Surely the drinking water supply we have out there and the sources of our drinking water are so important to each and every one of us that we cannot just leave it to chance that maybe the right decision is made. It should be made mandatory in legislation. That's what this bill speaks to.

We still haven't heard from any government member who claims that this government is doing more about our

water situation—the people out there know that isn't the case—about why you haven't endorsed and implemented all of Justice O'Connor's recommendations. I strongly suggest that if this House collectively wanted to send a message to the people of Ontario that we really care about our water supply sources and we want to make sure that the water people drink on a day-to-day basis is as pure as it possibly can be, then the best thing we could do is pass this bill unanimously on second reading today.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Mrs Domrowsky once again has brought forward a bill in this Legislature to deal with a situation that cries out for a legislated solution, and once again I hear the government say that they believe that what they have in place will solve the problem. It reminds me of the launch of a certain document last week, called *The Road Ahead*. I thought the term I heard on the news, *The Road to Walkerton*, was a better description of the launching of the new document, because the policies contained in there will lead once again, if not in the drinking water situation then in some other circumstance in the province, to another Walkerton.

The member has brought forward a piece of legislation for a variety of reasons. People in her area and across the province have expressed astonishment that the provincial government does not notify, is not obligated to notify, municipalities and other relevant agencies and people about permits to take water, oftentimes millions upon millions upon millions of litres of water. Where there was a test of the government's will in this regard was certainly the OMYA situation in eastern Ontario. It even reached an environmental tribunal. I think Pauline Browes was the chair of that tribunal. The discussion went on for several days; I heard there were 30 days of discussion and representations before the panel. A compelling case was made against the request of the company for its water-taking permit, which would take a huge amount of water from its position in eastern Ontario, yet the Minister of the Environment, when push came to shove, came down on the side of the company and not on the side of the environment. In fact, he overruled the environmental tribunal in this particular case, an independent environmental tribunal which had heard all the compelling evidence. The minister decided in his great wisdom that he would overrule that. To me, that epitomizes this government's approach to the environment: when push comes to shove, unless there is all kinds of public scrutiny and an outcry, this government will come down on the side of the anti-environment rather than the environment. That's most unfortunate.

The member calls for legislation. Why does she do that, instead of a regulation? The government says, "We have a regulation that will look after this." Regulations are made behind closed doors by a limited number of people with a limited amount of input and can be changed by the government. We saw an example of this in the House yesterday, where the government changed some of its regulations and sprang them on the House.

The government can do that at any time. Surely every member of this Legislature—except the cabinet itself—would want to see this provision enshrined in legislation. Why? First, it would have stronger force, and second, if the government wishes to change the provisions contained in the legislation, it must come before the House and have it debated in the House. That is far superior, because we've had a very bad example of a minister who simply caved in, if I may use that terminology, to a company that wanted to take millions upon millions of litres of water, and of course that was to be exported as part of a slurry.

The member, Mrs Dombrowsky, deserves credit for persistence because she has raised this issue in question period, in statements, in debates and during the time devoted to private members' hour. She is to be commended for that. I see no reason why the government members would not vote for this, if this was not what we call a whipped vote, if this were truly a free vote, as they claim.

This is the third anniversary of the Walkerton tragedy, that we're just about to pass. This is an example of how we have to deal with problems legislatively, proactively and in a way that will protect the environment. Mrs Dombrowsky's legislation will do that. I'm pleased to support it and I urge other members to do the same.

The Acting Speaker: In response, the member for Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington.

Mrs Dombrowsky: I would like to thank the members who participated in the debate this morning on what I believe to be a very important issue: the members for Northumberland, Prince Edward-Hastings, Toronto-Danforth, Parry Sound-Muskoka, Kingston and the Islands, and of course the member for St Catharines who has always so generously participated in the debate on this issue.

I would also like to thank the people from across Ontario who have taken the time repeatedly to write to me to express their support for this legislation, not just people from within my riding but from the ridings of Perth-Carleton, Barrie, Parry Sound, indeed from across Ontario. People are very concerned about their water sources and they want to ensure they are protected. They want to ensure their Ministry of the Environment is definitely following its own rule, its statement of environmental values.

The government would offer this morning by way of argument that this is already happening, that this is going to be regulated, so it is unnecessary. I would remind the members of the government that at the hearing around the OMYA issue in Perth, one of the arguments your lawyers put forward was that the Ministry of the Environment was not required to consider the statement of environmental values because it was not legislated.

That is what the bill this morning is all about. We want to enshrine in legislation that commitment for the people of Ontario, for the most precious resource we have—apart from our children, of course—our water. I

thank all the members who have participated and I hope that you will be able, in a very non-partisan way, to support this solid piece of legislation.

The Acting Speaker: This completes the time allocated for debate on ballot item 8. We will now deal with ballot item 7.

PEOPLE'S ACCESS TO THE FACTS ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 SUR L'ACCÈS DU PUBLIC AUX FAITS

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Mr Wood has moved second reading of Bill 29, An Act to amend the Public Inquiries Act.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

We will have a bell following my placing the question on ballot item 8.

ONTARIO WATER RESOURCES AMENDMENT ACT (WATER SOURCE PROTECTION), 2003

LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES RESSOURCES EN EAU DE L'ONTARIO (PROTECTION DES SOURCES D'ALIMENTATION EN EAU)

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Mrs Dombrowsky has moved second reading of Bill 35, An Act to amend the Ontario Water Resources Act with respect to water source protection.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

Carried.

Pursuant to standing order 96, this bill will be referred to—

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): Mr Speaker, I would ask that this bill be referred to the committee on general government.

The Acting Speaker: Mrs Dombrowsky has asked that the bill be referred to the standing committee on general government. Agreed?

All in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

Agreed.

PEOPLE'S ACCESS
TO THE FACTS ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 SUR L'ACCÈS
DU PUBLIC AUX FAITS

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1200 to 1205.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour will please stand and remain standing until their name is called by the Clerk.

Ayes

Agostino, Dominic
Barrett, Toby
Bartolucci, Rick
Beaubien, Marcel
Bountrogianni, Marie
Bradley, James J.
Bryant, Michael
Caplan, David
Clark, Brad
Cleary, John C.
Coburn, Brian
Colle, Mike
Cordiano, Joseph
Crozier, Bruce
DeFaria, Carl
Di Cocco, Caroline
Dombrowsky, Leona

Duncan, Dwight
Flaherty, Jim
Galt, Doug
Gerretsen, John
Gilchrist, Steve
Gill, Raminder
Gravelle, Michael
Guzzo, Garry J.
Hastings, John
Johnson, Bert
Klees, Frank
Kwinter, Monte
Marland, Margaret
Martiniuk, Gerry
Maves, Bart
Mazzilli, Frank
McDonald, AL

Miller, Norm
Munro, Julia
Mushinski, Marilyn
Parsons, Ernie
Patten, Richard
Peters, Steve
Phillips, Gerry
Pupatello, Sandra
Ruprecht, Tony
Sampson, Rob
Sergio, Mario
Smitherman, George
Tascona, Joseph N.
Wettlaufer, Wayne
Wood, Bob

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed will please stand and remain standing until their name is called by the Clerk.

Nays

Cunningham, Dianne
Kormos, Peter
Martin, Tony

Ouellette, Jerry J.
Prue, Michael
Turnbull, David

Wilson, Jim

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 49; the nays are 7.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Mr Bob Wood (London West): I'd like to thank the House for its support and ask that this be referred to the Legislative Assembly committee.

The Acting Speaker: Mr Wood has asked that the bill be referred to the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly. Agreed?

All those in favour will please stand and remain standing.

All those opposed will please stand.

Mr Wood has asked that the bill be referred to the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly. The majority is in favour.

All business now being complete, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1209 to 1330.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

BSE

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): The outbreak of BSE is dealing a huge blow to the \$1-billion-a-year Ontario beef industry. It's incumbent on every one of us in this Legislature associated with this building, be we the politicians or the media, that we do everything we can to instill confidence in this industry, that it is safe to eat beef. The experts out there are saying that it's safe to eat beef. We must ensure, though, that both levels of government continue to work together co-operatively to ensure that the investigation continues and that we put everything in place to ensure that the outbreak does not occur in Ontario.

We must do everything we can. I urge the Minister of Agriculture to, if need be, go it alone, as she has said, to do everything possible to reopen the American borders and the other exporting borders as well. Every day that we wait, our farmers are losing thousands and thousands of dollars.

We need the minister to please work as well with the rendering industry to ensure that their needs are being met as we work through this most difficult situation.

Most importantly, it's not too early for the Minister of Agriculture to start putting the wheels in motion to deal with compensation measures that we know are going to have to be undertaken.

We urge all Ontarians to choose beef as their meal choice. Fire up that barbecue and have a hamburger, have a steak, or try my favourite: Ontario corn-fed beef. Please, beef—it's what it's all about. Beef—we need to do everything we can to support this industry. You can do that at home, ladies and gentlemen, by making sure that you go out to that grocery store and buy some Ontario beef.

STAFF APPRECIATION

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): Since 1995, it has certainly been my honour to serve the people of Scarborough East. Members on both sides of this House work very hard to represent our communities. While we may be the public face of the provincial Legislature in our communities, our work could not be accomplished without a dedicated team of staff and volunteers who work very hard every day on our behalf.

In the past eight years, my community office has assisted literally thousands of individuals resolve conflicts between governments at all levels. They've helped people find jobs and training. They've assisted others with OSAP, Family Responsibility Office claims, WSIB claims, scrolls, and information on a wide variety of government programs. They have done so professionally and effectively, and for this I am exceedingly grateful.

I'd like to thank my constituency team, including Karen Cain, who has been with me right since 1995, Nadia Mangal, Mary Semple, as well as staff such as

Jack Douglas, who are now retired but who gave yeoman service while in our office.

I would also like to thank our hard-working summer students and volunteers, who have played a major role in helping us provide the best quality service to the residents of Scarborough East. They include Christina Serafico, Lisa Young, Scott Thompson and Karen Serafico.

I can't leave out the hard-working Queen's Park staff: Jenna Clark; my legislative intern, Graham Erion; and my EA, Paul Calandra, who has also been with me since day one.

Before this session of Parliament ends, I want to offer my heartfelt thanks to the people who are truly the backbone of the political process, our Queen's Park constituency staff.

DISTILLERY DISTRICT

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): Today marks an historic day in a riding that has been home to a lot of Ontario's history.

Later today, Cityscape Development will officially open the distillery district. This is the renovated former Gooderham and Worts Distillery in my riding near Front and Parliament. The distillery district promises to be one of the great new hotbeds of exciting activity in the city of Toronto. Recently Artscape opened a bunch of studios down there for artists. This is a renaissance that's bringing new life to one of the areas of our city long in need of it.

We have another historic opportunity for the Minister of Culture who's here with us today to play his role on behalf of the people of Ontario, and that is to ensure that one of the most historic sites in Canada, the first Parliament site at Front and Parliament, is restored to public hands so that this site, which has been the birthplace of the history of democracy in Upper Canada, can be used for the opportunity to tell us about our history and our heritage.

This past Saturday I joined with Councillor Pam McConnell and 300 or 400 other people, including mayoralty candidates Barbara Hall and John Tory, in lending support to see that this historic site is returned to public hands.

There's a cultural argument, but there's an economic argument too. The province of Ontario owns about 100 acres of adjacent land. There is no better way to ensure we get top dollar for that land and that we use it to its highest and best value than to take this historic site and make sure it underpins this distillery district that is coming to new life at Front and Parliament. I call on the Minister of Culture to act today.

CHRONIC FATIGUE SYNDROME

Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South): I rise to inform the House that last Monday, May 12, was the international day of recognition for ME, also known as

chronic fatigue syndrome. ME is a serious, debilitating, multi-system physical illness that affects individuals of all ages. Results of recent studies show that ME affects 522 women and 291 men for every 100,000 members of our population. The onset of the illness may be sudden, and while a few victims may be able to continue work or school, many are bedridden or require mobility devices.

ME has a particularly negative impact on our children and youth. As with adults, children may experience neurological or cognitive difficulties, muscle weakness, profound exhaustion and dysfunction of the immune system.

Despite ongoing worldwide research, the cause of ME remains unknown. Fortunately for sufferers of this debilitating disease, their cause is being well represented by the volunteers at the ME association of Ontario. Founded in 1990, this non-profit organization is dedicated to providing education and information to those affected by ME.

I ask all honourable members to join me in applauding the efforts of the dedicated volunteers of the MEAO as they help raise awareness of ME.

Members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario wear a blue ribbon in support those afflicted by ME and in the hope that the hard work and vigilance of volunteers and researchers will soon bring the incidence of ME to an end.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): My community of Sarnia-Lambton dutifully followed the provincial government's directive and amalgamated our hospitals. What we have now, seven years later, is an inadequate facility containing insufficient beds and a depleted and demoralized workforce. We do not have enough beds to meet the needs of our community, and we do not have enough nurses and health care professionals to manage the patients.

Not only is this hurting my community's ability to attract new doctors, but our best and our most experienced health care workers are leaving these inadequate facilities to work in the United States or pursue other careers.

Dr Withers is a family physician in Sarnia. He points out that the current ER was meant only as a temporary structure and that now it is treating double the patients it was designed to treat. Concerns over the working conditions, insufficient staffing and lack of available beds have driven away experienced emergency doctors and nurses to seek work elsewhere.

If workplace conditions and deficient infrastructures are not addressed, the Minister of Health should understand that the reality is that we cannot resolve the systemic shortage or keep pace with the exodus of health care professionals. As the MPP for Sarnia-Lambton, I want to make sure that the minister once again understands the urgent need in Sarnia-Lambton for a new hospital.

1340

SUDBURY REGIONAL HOSPITAL

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): For months now, phase 2 construction at the Sudbury Regional Hospital has been on hold. We've had an operating review, a capital review, recommendations, a supervisor, more recommendations, but no money from this government to finish this capital project. Instead we've been told we'll have to contribute even more to cover the local share of increased construction costs; this after the community has already fundraised more than we had to, in three years instead of five. Our community has done enough. We've met our obligations and we shouldn't be forced to do more. Instead it's time the Conservatives put their money on the table to get this project done.

Our regional hospital has a responsibility to provide health care services to people right across northeastern Ontario. We can't do that, much less meet the needs of local residents, when the wing for emergency services, for example, is still a huge hole in the ground.

The government doesn't understand that ongoing construction delays also put the northern medical school at risk. The media has already reported the opening might be delayed until 2005, due to issues involving accreditation. What medical student will apply to Sudbury if the future of the teaching hospital is in limbo? Who will come to teach if it's not clear the hospital will be done on time? We can't recruit if we can't guarantee the project will be done, and done on time. The government must announce money now so that the northern medical school is not compromised in this way.

Sudbury says, "Finish our hospital." That is what the Conservative government should do right now.

STRATFORD FESTIVAL

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): I rise today to inform my colleagues and all Ontarians that the Stratford Festival will celebrate the opening night of its 51st season this coming Monday, May 26, 2003.

This year's program includes Greek classics like Agamemnon and The Birds, modern Canadian works like the 1983 Governor General's Award winner *Quiet in the Land* by Anne Chislett, musicals like Rodgers' and Hammerstein's *The King and I*, and of course Shakespearean plays including Antony and Cleopatra and *The Taming of the Shrew*, which will be featured at Monday's opening night performance.

Interjection.

Mr Johnson: At this time I would like to recognize Richard Monette, the festival's artistic director since 1994, which might be of interest to the member for Windsor. Mr Monette, who has been with the festival in various roles for 31 years, recently agreed to continue as artistic director until 2007. This will make him the longest-serving artistic director in the festival's history. His continued devotion to the Stratford Festival has contributed greatly to its success.

Interjection.

Mr Johnson: I'd ask again if the member for Windsor would give me a little courtesy.

Talk about success: this year the festival will feature 23 plays in four venues. It creates almost 6,000 jobs in and around Stratford and accounts for 150,000 room nights in local hotels and bed and breakfasts. The estimated economic impact on the region is \$170 million.

I am looking forward to Monday's performance. I hope that all members of this House will visit Stratford this summer to see a play, eat especially good Canadian beef in one of the many fine restaurants and roam through the shops on the main street, which is Ontario Street in Stratford.

DAIMLERCHRYSLER

Ms Sandra Papatello (Windsor West): We've had extremely disappointing news today that DaimlerChrysler will not go ahead with a \$1.6-billion investment in my city to build a truck plant. The company was negotiating since last fall with federal and provincial governments to come up with a package that would at least assist in making the business case to build the plant.

DaimlerChrysler is being just too generous in citing the softening market as the only reason not to go ahead with this project. Having been kept abreast of information of the negotiations all along, it's been embarrassing to see the attitude of ministry officials in the just-don't-bother-me mood and months of delay in offering a package to DaimlerChrysler. As it was told to me, "The treatment from the government negotiating team was atrocious."

We have a minister responsible for innovation. Well, the flexible manufacturing facility proposed for Windsor is ideal for future production; it's the innovative approach to manufacturing that would also improve and modernize parts manufacturing.

Ontario ministries should have been leaping all over the potential for a new assembly plant, which rarely comes along these days. Instead this government practically chased them out the door. You need to be in the incentives game, which has wholly benefited southern states. I don't feel this government understands the lost jobs we are now facing—jobs that start at \$18 or more an hour. Our auto sector accounts for one in four jobs in my city; one in six jobs in this province. In a Liberal government under Dalton McGuinty, we'll lead an automotive investment SWAT team to get out there and look for new investment, not sit on our hands like this government has done.

DON YOUNG

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): I have a very moving story to relate about a young, 31-year-old man from Ennismore in my riding. On July 29 last year a gravel crusher destroyed Don Young's legs. During the ambulance ride to Sunnybrook Hospital and the ensuing

days of numerous surgeries, Don received 30 pints of blood. Miraculously, within six months he has learned to walk again and has now returned to work.

Don received an outpouring of support and encouragement from residents in the Peterborough riding. He realized that the availability of blood saved his life. He wanted to do something to show his appreciation. With his wife Stephanie and 15-month-old daughter Siera, the young family decided to host a special blood donors' clinic. The goal was to double the 30 pints of blood that Don received during his ordeal.

The Youngs were overwhelmed by the response to the clinic. Not only did they double the 30 pints; they exceeded it by 171 pints. Two hundred and seventy-seven people, 184 of them first-time donors, attended the clinic. Those who were not able to attend the clinic hosted by the Youngs are donating blood at Canadian Blood Services. At the last report, 280 had been donated.

Don owes his life to the people who gave blood at regular clinics. By sharing his story he encourages more people to see the value of donating blood. When Don is asked about his handicap, he responds, "I guess you're as handicapped as you feel." This young man and his family deserve to be applauded for their positive outlook and courage in overcoming a catastrophic incident by giving back to their community and for making people aware that they were given blood to save their lives.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

THE RIGHT CHOICES ACT (BUDGET MEASURES), 2003

LOI DE 2003 SUR LES BONS CHOIX (MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES)

Mrs Ecker moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 41, An Act to implement Budget measures / Projet de loi 41, Loi mettant en oeuvre les mesures budgétaires.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will please say, "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members; this will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1348 to 1353.

The Speaker: All those in favour will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted
Barrett, Toby
Beaubien, Marcel
Clark, Brad
Coburn, Brian
Cunningham, Dianne

Hardeman, Ernie
Hastings, John
Hudak, Tim
Johns, Helen
Johnson, Bert
Klees, Frank

Ouellette, Jerry J.
Runciman, Robert W.
Sampson, Rob
Spina, Joseph
Sterling, Norman W.
Stewart, R. Gary

DeFaria, Carl
Dunlop, Garfield
Ecker, Janet
Elliott, Brenda
Flaherty, Jim
Galt, Doug
Gilchrist, Steve
Gill, Raminder
Guzzo, Garry J.

Marland, Margaret
Martiniuk, Gerry
Maves, Bart
Mazzilli, Frank
McDonald, AL
Miller, Norm
Molinari, Tina R.
Mushinski, Marilyn
Newman, Dan

Stockwell, Chris
Tascona, Joseph N.
Tsubouchi, David H.
Turnbull, David
Wettlaufer, Wayne
Wilson, Jim
Witmer, Elizabeth
Wood, Bob
Young, David

The Speaker: All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Agostino, Dominic
Bartolucci, Rick
Bountrogianni, Marie
Bradley, James J.
Bryant, Michael
Caplan, David
Churley, Marilyn
Cleary, John C.
Colle, Mike

Cordiano, Joseph
Crozier, Bruce
Di Cocco, Caroline
Duncan, Dwight
Gravelle, Michael
Kormos, Peter
Kwinter, Monte
Marchese, Rosario
Martel, Shelley

Martin, Tony
McLeod, Lyn
Peters, Steve
Phillips, Gerry
Prue, Michael
Pupatello, Sandra
Ruprecht, Tony
Sergio, Mario
Smitherman, George

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 45; the nays are 27.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

STUDENT HEALTH AND SAFETY PROGRAMS ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 SUR LES PROGRAMMES DE SANTÉ ET DE SÉCURITÉ POUR ÉTUDIANTS

Mr Gravelle moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 42, An Act to bring health and safety programs to Ontario students / Projet de loi 42, Loi visant à offrir des programmes de santé et de sécurité aux étudiants de l'Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): The purpose of this legislation is to equip Ontario's students entering the workforce with the skills and knowledge they need to prevent injuries, fatalities and occupational disease in the workplace. We need this legislation because young workers are at a much higher risk of a workplace accident or disease than other workers. In fact, their chance of sustaining an injury at work is 80% higher than the average worker's. Nobody feels more strongly about this than the Thunder Bay Injured Workers' Support Group. This in fact is their legislation—legislation, may I say, that I have introduced before. I hope we'll be successful this time in having this act pass third reading.

ONTARIO HOME PROPERTY
TAX RELIEF FOR SENIORS ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 SUR L'ALLÈGEMENT
DE L'IMPÔT FONCIER RÉSIDENTIEL
POUR LES PERSONNES ÂGÉES
DE L'ONTARIO

Mrs Ecker moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 43, An Act to provide Ontario home property tax relief for seniors / Projet de loi 43, Loi prévoyant un allègement de l'impôt foncier résidentiel pour les personnes âgées de l'Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members; this will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1358 to 1403.

The Speaker: All those in favour will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Hardeman, Ernie	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Barrett, Toby	Hastings, John	Runciman, Robert W.
Beaubien, Marcel	Hudak, Tim	Sampson, Rob
Clark, Brad	Johns, Helen	Spina, Joseph
Clement, Tony	Johnson, Bert	Sterling, Norman W.
Coburn, Brian	Klees, Frank	Stewart, R. Gary
Cunningham, Dianne	Marland, Margaret	Stockwell, Chris
DeFaria, Carl	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tascona, Joseph N.
Dunlop, Garfield	Maves, Bart	Tsubouchi, David H.
Ecker, Janet	Mazzilli, Frank	Turnbull, David
Elliott, Brenda	McDonald, AL	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Flaherty, Jim	Miller, Norm	Wilson, Jim
Galt, Doug	Molinari, Tina R.	Witmer, Elizabeth
Gilchrist, Steve	Munro, Julia	Wood, Bob
Gill, Raminder	Mushinski, Marilyn	Young, David
Guzzo, Garry J.	Newman, Dan	

The Speaker: All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Agostino, Dominic	Crozier, Bruce	McLeod, Lyn
Bartolucci, Rick	Di Cocco, Caroline	Peters, Steve
Bountrogianni, Marie	Duncan, Dwight	Phillips, Gerry
Bryant, Michael	Gravelle, Michael	Prue, Michael
Caplan, David	Kormos, Peter	Pupatello, Sandra
Churley, Marilyn	Kwinter, Monte	Ruprecht, Tony
Cleary, John C.	Marchese, Rosario	Sergio, Mario
Colle, Mike	Martel, Shelley	Smitherman, George
Cordiano, Joseph	Martin, Tony	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 47; the nays are 26.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY
AMENDMENT ACT (WORKPLACE
CARCINOMA COMMITTEE), 2003

LOI DE 2003
MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA SANTÉ
ET LA SÉCURITÉ AU TRAVAIL
(COMITÉ DU CARCINOME
D'ORIGINE PROFESSIONNELLE)

Mr Bartolucci moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 44, An Act to amend the Occupational Health and Safety Act to require the appointment of a workplace carcinoma committee / Projet de loi 44, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la santé et la sécurité au travail en vue d'exiger la constitution d'un comité du carcinome d'origine professionnelle.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): This bill amends the Occupational Health and Safety Act to require the minister to appoint a workplace carcinoma committee responsible for advising, investigating and reporting on matters concerning workplace cancers.

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): Just a quick point of order because they have to leave shortly, Mr Speaker: I introduce Mayor Charlie Primeau; Roy Sinclair, the CAO; and Eric Rutherford, deputy mayor, of Greenstone, northwestern Ontario.

INQUIRY INTO
POLICE INVESTIGATIONS
OF SEXUAL ABUSE AGAINST MINORS
IN THE CORNWALL AREA ACT, 2003
LOI DE 2003 PRÉVOYANT UNE ENQUÊTE
SUR LES ENQUÊTES POLICIÈRES
RELATIVES AUX PLAINTES DE MAUVAIS
TRAITEMENTS D'ORDRE SEXUEL
INFLIGÉS À DES MINEURS
DANS LA RÉGION DE CORNWALL

Mr Guzzo moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 45, An Act to establish a commission to inquire into the investigations by police forces of complaints of sexual abuse against minors in the Cornwall area / Projet de loi 45, Loi visant à créer une commission chargée d'enquêter sur les enquêtes menées par des corps de police sur les plaintes de mauvais traitements d'ordre sexuel infligés à des mineurs dans la région de Cornwall.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

The member for a short statement?

1410

Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa West-Nepean): There's not much more I can add. I've added that it's the same bill which has been passed in this House on two occasions, but there are additional circumstances and additional information that I would welcome the opportunity to circulate amongst the members of the House, and I will take that opportunity early next week.

I'd just say to you that as a result of the settlement of a number of civil cases there, all with a confidentiality clause refusing to allow the individuals to talk to the press and, in one case, name members of this Legislative Assembly—a very, very remarkable circumstance, I might tell you. I'm pleased to be lumped with the member from Cornwall in that confidentiality contract. I thank you for the opportunity.

TRUTH ABOUT IPPERWASH ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 CONCERNANT LA VÉRITÉ SUR IPPERWASH

Mr Phillips moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 46, An Act to provide for a public inquiry to discover the truth about events at Ipperwash Provincial Park leading to the death of Dudley George / Projet de loi 46, Loi prévoyant une enquête publique pour découvrir la vérité sur les événements qui se sont produits au parc provincial Ipperwash et qui ont conduit au décès de Dudley George.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I understand that the member for Ottawa West-Nepean is also planning to introduce a similar bill, and I didn't mean to scoop him, but this is a bill that I introduced before. I would hope that, before we adjourn, the Legislature would agree to conduct this. If we do not do this now, a considerable amount of money will be spent on a civil case that, in my opinion and the opinion of many Ontarians, would be better spent in an inquiry to get at the truth about Ipperwash.

RETAIL SALES TAX RELIEF FOR AMATEUR

YOUTH SPORTS ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 VISANT À ALLÉGER LA TAXE DE VENTE AU DÉTAIL EN MATIÈRE DE SPORT AMATEUR POUR LA JEUNESSE

Mr Sampson moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 47, An Act to amend the Retail Sales Tax Act to provide an exemption from tax for amateur youth sports / Projet de loi 47, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la taxe de vente au détail pour prévoir une exemption de taxe en matière de sport amateur pour la jeunesse.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): On a point of order to you, Mr Speaker: Is that bill going to be in order? It sounds as though it is a money bill. Perhaps the member would prefer to put it on the order paper as a resolution that this House could deal with.

The Speaker: We obviously haven't had a chance to read it, but we will, as we do scrutinize all bills.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

Mr Rob Sampson (Mississauga Centre): This is the identical bill that stood on the order paper in the third session of the 37th Parliament that you ruled could stay on the order paper, and it's the second time the opposition has stood against amateur sports in the province of Ontario, and I'm disappointed to hear that.

This actually does help hundreds of thousands—

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): You're such a piece of work.

Mr Sampson: I'm sorry, to the honourable member. I'm sorry, Speaker, does the member have the floor right now?

The Speaker: Order. Let the member have his time, please.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): Speak to the bill then.

Mr Sampson: I am going to speak to the bill. It helps hundreds of thousands of young boys and girls who are involved in amateur sports—

Mr Duncan: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: It's a speech. He has already taken something we said right out of order. We'd like to see this—

The Speaker: It is a short speech.

I'd just remind everyone that there are a lot of members who do want it. We have a 30-minute rule. If we can get to it, we'll get more members on.

Mr Sampson: It's a bill I've already introduced in the previous session of this Parliament. It helps hundreds of thousands of young boys and girls who are involved in amateur sports stay involved in amateur sports. It gives them some tax support to do so. To the honourable members opposite, I hope I have your support to do that.

BUSINESS CORPORATIONS AMENDMENT ACT (LIMITING COMPULSORY ACQUISITIONS), 2003

LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES SOCIÉTÉS PAR ACTIONS (RESTRICTION DES ACQUISITIONS FORCÉES)

Ms Pupatello moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 48, An Act to amend the Business Corporations Act to limit compulsory acquisitions / Projet de loi 48,

Loi modifiant la Loi sur les sociétés par actions en vue de restreindre les acquisitions forcées.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for short statement?

Ms Sandra Papatello (Windsor West): Briefly, the bill amends the Business Corporations Act to exempt the application of section 188 of the compulsory acquisitions section, takeover bids or issuer bids made in respect of an offeror corporation whose equity securities were the subject of an initial public offering at any time within five years. This is specifically meant to address the issue of so many individuals who invested in TD-Waterhouse stock, which was then in a forced-sale takeover. Many, many individuals across the country, let alone in Ontario, lost tens of thousands of dollars. This is meant to address that.

KITCHENER-WATERLOO COMMUNITY FOUNDATION ACT, 2003

Mr Wettlaufer moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr23, An Act respecting the Kitchener and Waterloo Community Foundation.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Pursuant to standing order 84, this bill stands referred to the standing committee on regulations and private bills.

SENIORS' PROTECTION ACT, 2003 LOI DE 2003 SUR LA PROTECTION DES PERSONNES ÂGÉES

Mr Colle moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 49, An Act to protect people over the age of 65 from discrimination by amending the Human Rights Code / Projet de loi 49, Loi visant à protéger les personnes de plus de 65 ans de toute discrimination en modifiant le Code des droits de la personne.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for short statement?

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): This is the second time I've introduced this bill. This bill, if passed, would amend the Human Rights Code, making it contrary to the act to discriminate in employment on the basis of age because a person is 65 years of age or older. I think it's time to end this discrimination. If the government is really serious about it, they would move unanimous consent to support this passage right here and now.

The Speaker: Introduction of bills? The member for Etobicoke North.

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke North): Well, it's about time. We've got all the time in the world. This is the first time—

The Speaker: The other members want to get in. We're coming down to the last five minutes. Other members cannot—I would appreciate it if the member would hurry up.

Mr Hastings: Thanks for the lecture, Speaker. The bill I am introducing today is entitled—

The Speaker: Just a second. Member take his seat, please.

Mr Hastings left the chamber.

THUNDER BAY FOUNDATION ACT, 2003

Mr Gravelle moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr20, An Act respecting the Thunder Bay Foundation.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Pursuant to standing order 84, this bill stands referred to the standing committee on regulations and private bills.

1420

MINISTRY OF CORRECTIONAL SERVICES AMENDMENT ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LE MINISTÈRE DES SERVICES CORRECTIONNELS

Mr Sampson moved the first reading of the following bill:

Bill 50, An Act to amend the Ministry of Correctional Services Act / Projet de loi 50, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le ministère des Services correctionnels.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

A short statement from the member?

Mr Rob Sampson (Mississauga Centre): No, Speaker, so the other members can introduce, I'll pass, thank you.

The Speaker: I thank the member for the kind gesture, but unfortunately under standing order 33(f), the period for introduction of bills shall be limited to 30 minutes, and unfortunately we hit that. But I appreciate the member's co-operation.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business. I move that notwithstanding standing order 96(d), the following changes be made to the ballot list for private members' public business: Mr

Stewart and Mr Sampson exchange places in order of precedence, such that Mr Stewart assumes ballot item 39 and Mr Sampson assumes ballot item number 9.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Agreed? Carried.

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to ask the indulgence of the House by seeking unanimous consent to remove parts I and III of Bill 28, which would allow the children in Toronto Catholic schools to get back into the classroom.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? I'm afraid I heard some noes.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

TAX LEGISLATION

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Finance): I'm very pleased to rise and inform the House about the introduction of two significant pieces of legislation: the Ontario Home Property Tax Relief for Seniors Act and The Right Choices Act. I will also be introducing a third piece of budget legislation in the next few days entitled The Right Choices for Equity in Education Act. Combined, these three bills continue our economic plan for Ontario, a plan that has resulted in record economic growth and over one million new jobs for Ontarians.

Our seniors have contributed greatly to the economic prosperity we enjoy today in Ontario. The Ontario Home Property Tax Relief for Seniors Act proposes to recognize those contributions by providing seniors with additional tax relief. The Ontario Home Property Tax Relief for Seniors Act, if approved by this Legislature, will provide seniors with property tax relief on their principal residence. I've also introduced The Right Choices Act, which proposes a number of initiatives supporting economic prosperity by providing tax relief to individuals, cutting business taxes, encouraging investment and ensuring that those businesses that owe tax should pay tax. Taken together, these measures reflect the priorities of Ontarians.

For many seniors, rising costs such as property taxes eat into their fixed incomes. This bill proposes to complete the government's commitment to reduce residential property taxes through this new focused tax relief for our seniors. I had the privilege of speaking to a number of seniors this morning who were very pleased that we were recognizing their contribution to society, to our economic prosperity, in this way—something that will be of assistance to them.

Seniors who own or rent their homes would be eligible for a credit that reimburses them for the educational portion of their residential property tax, beginning July 1 this year. This would mean an average annual net saving of \$475 for each senior household. In total, 945,000 senior households will benefit from approximately \$450

million in tax relief—a very significant benefit for our seniors, and well deserved.

I would like to be clear that this additional property tax relief to seniors does not in any way diminish or impact or affect funding for public education in this province, as our critics across the way have tried to portray, and to cause seniors to question the relief they would be provided through this legislation if it were passed. In the 2003 budget, for example, we have committed almost \$2 billion more to our public education system by 2005-06. That is the most ever spent for public education in Ontario, important investments that the Minister of Education will be using to improve our schools, to improve how our children learn, to improve the outcomes of our public education system.

This bill would also provide relief over and above what is now offered by the existing Ontario tax credits program, which includes a combined property tax and sales tax credit for low- and moderate-income seniors. I think we need to be clear about that, because the critics across the way again are attempting to confuse seniors about what this means.

To qualify for their credit, senior owners or renters will apply once a year. Of course, if this legislation is passed, information will be available for our seniors on how they can do this, much like application programs that have existed before and continue to exist in other programs.

I would encourage all members of this House to support this legislation. I know we were very distressed on this side to see that the Liberals voted against this tax relief for seniors here today. We can only hope that when they've had an opportunity to read the bill, to talk to seniors in their community, they might well wish to revise their position.

The 2003 budget also included other initiatives which support our seniors, some of which are included in the second piece of legislation I have introduced today, The Right Choices Act. As we announced in the budget, we propose to exempt certain types of life leases from land transfer tax. Life leases are a unique form of seniors' housing where seniors receive the exclusive right to occupy a residential unit for life in return for an upfront payment and monthly maintenance fees. Life leases that are sponsored by registered charities or non-profit organizations would be exempt from land transfer tax. We expect this measure to provide average savings of approximately \$1,500 per unit.

The Right Choices Act also includes proposals to improve tax credits for people with disabilities and for family caregivers. We estimate that this increased tax support would provide average savings of about \$300 each to 165,000 family caregivers and people with disabilities in this province.

We recognize on this side of the House that the leader of the official opposition does not agree with tax relief, and he and the Liberal Party have pledged to cancel this relief for seniors. They do not appreciate that it is tax relief for individuals, for our business community, that has helped support Ontario's strong economic growth,

and we've certainly seen that track record in the last eight years. They also must not understand the contribution of seniors to our economy and to the strength of this province.

1430

Our overall programs of tax cuts for individual taxpayers and for business have helped to strengthen the province's economy for everyone, including seniors, by creating more than one million new jobs, by paying down \$5 billion on the provincial debt, by presenting our fifth consecutive balanced budget and by propelling Ontario to the forefront of G7 nations in terms of economic growth.

The proposed Right Choices Act takes further steps to ensure this successful economic plan continues.

It proposes to reduce taxes further for taxpayers with low to moderate incomes—modest-income taxpayers, who can be removed entirely from the Ontario income tax rolls, where they do not have to pay Ontario income tax. Many, unfortunately, still have to pay federal tax, but we are relieving them from the obligation of paying Ontario income tax—important support for modest-income Ontarians.

It proposes to remove the surtax for those taxpayers making \$75,000 or less—again, an important support for individuals who many times provide the managerial and entrepreneurial, creative and innovative spirit in so many of our organizations and companies across the province.

It proposes to enrich the Ontario child care supplement for working families, thereby helping 350,000 children and over 220,000 families—again, tax relief that is very broad-based, that will help many Ontario families.

The bill would also provide further tax relief to business by reducing the capital tax by 10% by January 1, 2004. What we heard very clearly was that the capital tax was a tax that discourages investment in this province, that kills jobs in this province. We do not want to let that happen.

Another important component of the proposals in this legislation is that businesses who do not pay their taxes in a timely fashion will face serious consequences under the bill's proposals if they do not do that. I think that for taxpayers to see our system as being fair, as being accountable, these also will be important changes that I hope the opposition will support.

The proposed legislation also includes measures to further promote electricity self-sufficiency, the use of alternative fuels and also to encourage the production of clean, renewable energy here in the province.

The bill proposes changes to the Retail Sales Tax Act's purchase exemption certificate system. This will reduce the red tape and the compliance costs for vendors and taxpayers when claiming an exemption from RST on their purchases. One of the important groups that will benefit from that are Ontario farmers.

We are also proposing a new act in this legislation, the Trust Beneficiaries Liability Act, which will clarify that investors in publicly traded trusts would not be liable for the activities of the trust or the trustees.

The Ontario Home Property Tax Relief for Seniors Act and the Right Choices Act that we've introduced

today both continue our successful economic plan for Ontario. It is a plan that is working to create more jobs, more growth, more prosperity for this province. It is a plan that needs to continue. I would urge all members of this House to support these important bills.

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I would say to the public, take this with a grain of salt. I use as evidence, Minister, that the last time you ran, in 1999, you made these promises. You said, "We'll cut the provincial portion of residential property tax by 20% over our next term. This tax cut will put \$500 million into the hands of"—you didn't do it, Minister. I know you may leave now, but you broke that promise. You said publicly, "We're not going ahead with that. We're sorry. That promise is gone." I say to the public, take it with a grain of salt.

I realize the minister may not want to hear this. It was just a year ago that the minister got up here in the Legislature and cut \$1.5 billion of planned tax cuts—just simply cancelled them. In their own justification, I say to the public, how did they justify cancelling \$1.5 billion of tax cuts? This is what they said, "Questions and answers": "How can the government justify breaking the Taxpayer Protection Act?" Well, to meet the target of a balanced budget, the government scheduled—

Interjections.

Mr Phillips: Yes, you had to cancel the tax cuts. The public should listen to this. They acknowledge they simply broke the Taxpayer Protection Act, cancelled \$1.5 billion of tax cuts.

You make these promises that you don't keep. You make promises that you can't keep. I quote those two to the public. The last election, "Oh, we're going to cut the residential education property tax," and then you didn't do it. Then you promised you were going to cut taxes by \$1.5 billion. You simply didn't do it. Not only that, there was a law that requires you to do it. What did you do? "Oh, we'll simply break the law. We'll come in here and amend the law." I say to the public, take this with a grain of salt. These are just like the promises they made in 1999 and just like the promises they broke when they broke the Taxpayer Protection Act.

I say to the public, the minister just said, "We're getting rid of something called the fair share health levy." I remember when Mr Eves first got elected, one of the big promises was, "We're going to have something called a fair share health levy. That will make sure that we properly fund health care." What's the minister doing? Cancelling that fair share health levy.

Interjections.

Mr Phillips: There they go applauding again. The public should realize that when they got elected, they promised they would fund health care with a fair share health levy. It's gone. This bill takes out the fair share health levy. I say this to the public: they promised a 20% cut in residential education property tax to everyone. That's how you got elected. Think about that, folks. But now you've broken that promise. Part of the real platform of the Conservatives was this Taxpayer Protection Act, and you just simply abandoned it.

I would say to the public, have no confidence in these promises. They will be just like they made in 1999.

I would also say to the public that what Mr Eves is talking about is having corporate income taxes 25% lower than our competitors in the US. I say, why? In Ontario, we fund health care in a certain way that saves the average manufacturer, the average company, \$2,500 per employee. But we also want to have corporate taxes 25% lower. It can't be done, folks. The proof of the pudding for the public is that you had to abandon the Taxpayer Protection Act. You couldn't afford the tax cuts you promised before, and you can't afford the tax cuts you're promising now.

My final point is on the seniors. Recognize this: the richer you are, the more you get directly in proportion to the value of your house. People with a \$1-million house are going to get 10 times what somebody with an average \$100,000 house is going to get. It is a gift to the rich, to the best-off. Believe me, it will come out of education funding. The seniors in my area understand the importance of education. I say that this is, without a doubt, an attempt to buy the votes of the most well-off in Ontario at the expense of our education system, at the expense of the quality of life in Ontario. You can't trust what Mr Eves is promising.

1440

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): This government today speaks but to the smallest of percentages, those very wealthiest of seniors, just like it spoke to Frank Stronach a month ago up at Magna Corp when it announced its contemptuous bogus budget up at Frank Stronach's Magna auto parts manufacturing. In that announcement that day, Frank Stronach—what was his income last year? His personal income was some \$56 million, \$57 million or \$58 million. This government gave Frank Stronach a \$3.5-million tax cut.

Today it's announcing that Frank Stronach, with his \$10-million mansion, like the feudal overlord looking down at his empire, is now going to be subsidized by hard-working taxpayers in this province by virtue of property taxes being paid—\$10,000, \$20,000 or \$30,000. Today Frank Stronach got a \$30,000 cut on the property taxes on his \$10-million mansion.

This government today announces yet more corporate tax cuts. If this government really wanted to address seniors and talk about seniors, it would be announcing today full funding for home care services. Every one of us in our ridings and in our constituency offices has an unceasing series of phone calls from families whose folks are left alone in their homes, with diminishing numbers and diminishing hours of home care, folks who are literally left unwashed, unbathed, unshaven and unfed because this government has gutted home care services here in Ontario.

Where we come from, the seniors who need help are the seniors who are being denied home care services by this government. Where we come from, the seniors who need help are the seniors who need full coverage for treatment for macular degeneration. Where we come

from, the seniors who need help are seniors who need those pharmaceuticals relisted, in contrast to the aggressive delisting of drugs, so that they don't have to pay out of pocket for drugs that keep them alive, keep them mobile and keep them travelling.

Seniors like Sheila Volchert, grandparents raising their grandchildren, need direct financial help to enable them to do the important jobs they are doing.

You want to help seniors? Stop downloading on to municipalities.

You want to help seniors? Abandon and reverse your agenda of the privatization and deregulation of Ontario Hydro, because the most aggressive attack on seniors in the last 12 months was the one orchestrated by this government when it drove seniors' electricity costs through the roof. Taxpayers, including seniors, are now subsidizing your phoney cap already to the point of \$1.5 billion, and the number is going to increase.

You want to help seniors? Get more nurses into our hospitals, so that so many of those patients who are seniors can receive the care they deserve. I was at Hotel Dieu just two weeks ago in St Catharines, the beginning of nurses' week. Hotel Dieu Hospital in St Catharines is still laying off nurses because of the fiscal restraints you placed them under.

You want to help seniors? Ensure we have real rent control here in the province of Ontario.

You want to help seniors? Ensure that our folks, who worked so hard building things like public education and public health care—ensure you don't rob them of what they built and the legacy they've left to subsequent generations.

You want to help seniors? Abandon your agenda of privatization, with new user fees every day of the week that do a direct attack on seniors.

You want to help seniors? Don't tell them they have to keep working beyond the age of 65, but adopt the NDP pension reform legislation proposals that would ensure every worker in this province is a part of a defined benefit pension plan, one that vests immediately, and one that's indexed.

You want to help seniors? Start talking to the injured workers in this province, so many of whom are rapidly aging, who are suffering as a result of this government's attack on injured workers.

You want to help seniors? Ensure their grandchildren can attend university without exorbitant tuition rates of \$10,000, \$15,000, \$20,000, \$21,000 and \$25,000 a year, so that those seniors can watch their grandchildren graduate from university and colleges.

You want to help seniors? Show some regard for the tremendous contribution of seniors to the development of public services in this province over the course of so many decades and generations.

This is an attack on mainstream seniors in this province, it's an insult to them, and it's yet another favour to your wealthiest of friends.

NOTICE OF REASONED AMENDMENT

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Just before we continue, I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 69(b), the House leader of the third party, the member for Niagara Centre, has notified the Clerk of his intention to file notice of a reasoned amendment to the motion for second reading of Bill 28, An Act to resolve a labour dispute between the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association and the Toronto Catholic District School Board and to amend the Education Act and the Provincial Schools Negotiations Act. The order for second reading may therefore not be called today.

Just before we begin, on a point of order, the member for Trinity-Spadina.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would ask unanimous consent to pass second and third reading of Bill 31, An Act to ensure the preservation of the site of Toronto's first Parliament buildings.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? I'm afraid I heard some noes.

DEFERRED VOTES

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): We now have a deferred vote on the amendment to the amendment to the motion for an address in reply to the speech of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor at the opening of the session.

Call in the members; this will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1446 to 1451.

The Speaker: Mr Hampton has moved that the amendment to the motion be amended by striking out all words after "Whereas Ontarians" and substituting the following:

"have felt the impact of bad Conservative privatization policies where it hurts—in the pocketbook;"—

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Dispense.

The Speaker: Dispense? Agreed?

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): No, I think you should read it.

The Speaker: OK.

"Whereas the Conservatives ignore evidence from around the world that privatization of public necessities—such as water, hydro, health, education—doesn't work and costs more;

"Whereas Ontarians are looking for practical solutions that would:

"Stop hydro privatization and deregulation and ensure clean, reliable public power at cost.

"Extend public home care, create 100 new community health centres and cut long-term-care user fees. Cancel plans for private MRI/CT clinics and privately built hospitals and put funds back into public health care.

"Keep our drinking water public and protect water from source to tap.

"Ensure every student has the opportunity to excel, guaranteed by a dedicated education excellence fund that takes the politics out of education funding. No public funds for private schools.

"Immediately increase the minimum wage to \$8 an hour, prohibit scabs and treat injured workers fairly.

"Freeze rents for two years, build at least 32,000 units of affordable housing and increase shelter allowances.

"Cut tuition by 10% and ensure that no student is denied a quality education or training for financial reasons.

"Lower transit fares, shorten waits and reduce gridlock with a dedicated transportation trust fund.

"Reduce child care fees to \$10 a day for 18-month-olds to five-year-olds in non-profit, regulated child care and create 20,000 new child care spaces.

"Protect your pension from inflation and let you take it with you from job to job.

"Therefore, this House endorses an agenda of public power."

All those in favour of Mr Hampton's amendment to the amendment to the motion will please rise.

Ayes

Christopherson, David	Marchese, Rosario	Prue, Michael
Churley, Marilyn	Martel, Shelley	
Kormos, Peter	Martin, Tony	

The Speaker: Those opposed to the amendment to the amendment to the motion will please rise.

Nays

Agostino, Dominic	Galt, Doug	Newman, Dan
Arnott, Ted	Gilchrist, Steve	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Barrett, Toby	Gill, Raminder	Peters, Steve
Bartolucci, Rick	Gravelle, Michael	Phillips, Gerry
Bountrogianni, Marie	Guzzo, Garry J.	Pupatello, Sandra
Bradley, James J.	Hardeman, Ernie	Runciman, Robert W.
Caplan, David	Hudak, Tim	Ruprecht, Tony
Clark, Brad	Johns, Helen	Sampson, Rob
Cleary, John C.	Johnson, Bert	Sergio, Mario
Clement, Tony	Kennedy, Gerard	Smitherman, George
Coburn, Brian	Klees, Frank	Spina, Joseph
Colle, Mike	Kwinter, Monte	Sterling, Norman W.
Cordiano, Joseph	Marland, Margaret	Stewart, R. Gary
Crozier, Bruce	Martiniuk, Gerry	Stockwell, Chris
Cunningham, Dianne	Maves, Bart	Tascona, Joseph N.
DeFaria, Carl	Mazzilli, Frank	Tsubouchi, David H.
Di Cocco, Caroline	McDonald, AL	Turnbull, David
Duncan, Dwight	McLeod, Lyn	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Dunlop, Garfield	Miller, Norm	Wilson, Jim
Ecker, Janet	Molinari, Tina R.	Witmer, Elizabeth
Elliott, Brenda	Munro, Julia	Wood, Bob
Flaherty, Jim	Mushinski, Marilyn	Young, David

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 7; the nays are 66.

The Speaker: I declare the amendment to the amendment to the motion lost.

We will now deal with Mr McGuinty's motion, that the address in reply to the speech of His Honour the

Lieutenant Governor at the opening of this session be amended by striking out all the words after, "We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario," and substituting the following:

"Whereas Ontarians want a real and positive change;

"Whereas Ontarians want a government that will fix the vital public services that we all need, while keeping the budget in balance and holding the line on taxes;

"Whereas Ontarians want a government that will cancel the \$3.2-billion tax giveaway to large corporations and put that money toward improved health care, with more doctors and nurses and shorter waiting lists;

"Whereas Ontarians want a government that will cancel the private school tax credit and put that money back into improving our public schools through smaller class sizes;

"Whereas Ontarians want a government that will end taxpayer-funded, self-serving partisan advertising and put that money toward improving our water quality monitoring system and improving our air by closing coal-fired plants and mandating cleaner gasoline;

"Whereas the speech from the throne proved that the Eves government has been dithering, continues to support two-tier health care, private school tax credits, giveaways to large corporations, taxpayer-funded self-serving advertising and compromised environmental protection;

"Therefore, this House profoundly regrets that nothing has changed. The Eves government is tired, cynical, out of touch, out of steam and out of ideas, and instead of providing the real and positive change Ontarians demand, are only looking out for themselves and their friends."

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1458 to 1503.

The Speaker: All those in favour of Mr McGuinty's amendment to the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Agostino, Dominic
Bartolucci, Rick
Bountrogianni, Marie
Bradley, James J.
Bryant, Michael
Caplan, David
Christopherson, David
Churley, Marilyn
Cleary, John C.
Colle, Mike

Cordiano, Joseph
Crozier, Bruce
Di Cocco, Caroline
Duncan, Dwight
Gravelle, Michael
Kennedy, Gerard
Kormos, Peter
Kwinter, Monte
Marchese, Rosario
Martel, Shelley

Martin, Tony
McLeod, Lyn
Peters, Steve
Phillips, Gerry
Prue, Michael
Pupatello, Sandra
Ruprecht, Tony
Sergio, Mario
Smitherman, George

Nays

Arnott, Ted
Barrett, Toby
Clark, Brad
Clement, Tony

Hardeman, Ernie
Hudak, Tim
Johns, Helen
Johnson, Bert

Ouellette, Jerry J.
Runciman, Robert W.
Sampson, Rob
Spina, Joseph

Coburn, Brian
Cunningham, Dianne
DeFaria, Carl
Dunlop, Garfield
Ecker, Janet
Elliott, Brenda
Flaherty, Jim
Galt, Doug
Gilchrist, Steve
Gill, Raminder
Guzzo, Garry J.

Klees, Frank
Marland, Margaret
Martiniuk, Gerry
Maves, Bart
Mazzilli, Frank
McDonald, AL
Miller, Norm
Molinari, Tina R.
Munro, Julia
Mushinski, Marilyn
Newman, Dan

Sterling, Norman W.
Stewart, R. Gary
Stockwell, Chris
Tascona, Joseph N.
Tsubouchi, David H.
Turnbull, David
Wettlaufer, Wayne
Wilson, Jim
Witmer, Elizabeth
Wood, Bob
Young, David

Clerk of the House: The ayes are 29; the nays are 45.

The Speaker: I declare the amendment to the motion lost.

Mr Dunlop has moved that a humble address be presented to His Honour the Lieutenant Governor as follows:

"To the Honourable James K. Bartleman, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario:

"We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario now assembled, beg leave to thank your Honour for the gracious speech your Honour has addressed to us."

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members; this will also be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1507 to 1512.

The Speaker: All those in favour of Mr Dunlop's motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted
Barrett, Toby
Clark, Brad
Clement, Tony
Coburn, Brian
DeFaria, Carl
Dunlop, Garfield
Ecker, Janet
Elliott, Brenda
Flaherty, Jim
Galt, Doug
Gilchrist, Steve
Gill, Raminder
Guzzo, Garry J.
Hardeman, Ernie

Hudak, Tim
Johns, Helen
Johnson, Bert
Klees, Frank
Marland, Margaret
Martiniuk, Gerry
Maves, Bart
Mazzilli, Frank
McDonald, AL
Miller, Norm
Molinari, Tina R.
Munro, Julia
Mushinski, Marilyn
Newman, Dan
Ouellette, Jerry J.

Runciman, Robert W.
Sampson, Rob
Spina, Joseph
Sterling, Norman W.
Stewart, R. Gary
Stockwell, Chris
Tascona, Joseph N.
Tsubouchi, David H.
Turnbull, David
Wettlaufer, Wayne
Wilson, Jim
Witmer, Elizabeth
Wood, Bob
Young, David

The Speaker: All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Agostino, Dominic
Bartolucci, Rick
Bountrogianni, Marie
Bradley, James J.
Bryant, Michael
Caplan, David
Christopherson, David
Churley, Marilyn
Cleary, John C.
Colle, Mike

Cordiano, Joseph
Crozier, Bruce
Di Cocco, Caroline
Duncan, Dwight
Gravelle, Michael
Kennedy, Gerard
Kormos, Peter
Kwinter, Monte
Marchese, Rosario
Martel, Shelley

Martin, Tony
McLeod, Lyn
Peters, Steve
Phillips, Gerry
Prue, Michael
Pupatello, Sandra
Ruprecht, Tony
Sergio, Mario
Smitherman, George

The Speaker: All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Clerk of the House: The ayes are 44; the nays are 29.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

VISITOR

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I know the assembly would want to welcome my constituent Mally Katrycz, whose son Charles is doing yeoman duty here as one of this term's pages.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I would just like to mention to all the members—and I'm sure they're aware of it—that this is the last day for this fine group of pages. I'm sure all members would like to thank this wonderful group of young people who have served us well. And to all the parents who may be watching, you can be very proud of the fine young men and women who are up here representing us very well. We thank all of them.

ORAL QUESTIONS

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): I have a question for the Minister of Education. You have taken millions out of your budget for classrooms to purchase expensive television ads in recent weeks and months. In one of those ads, you allege that \$250 million had been sent to children with special needs in schools, and you swamped the airwaves. Many of the parents who saw that knew it didn't square with the situation of them and their families and they wrote to Advertising Standards Canada, the industry regulator. The industry regulator reviewed your commercial and found that it contravened their standards. They say you have spent millions of taxpayers' dollars to make an inaccurate claim.

Parents like Gayle Stuart believe the \$50 million that was clawed back, which wasn't talked about in that commercial, is astronomical when it comes to the services their children are missing.

Minister, will you apologize for authorizing these misleading commercials and will you pull all your ads and put the money they cost back into the badly needed services students require instead? Will you do that, Minister?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Deputy Premier, Minister of Education): It's rather interesting that the member opposite has all this information. I can certainly tell him that any of the recent ads that were run by the government were accurate. They stated that \$250 million had been made available for special education funding. They also said that \$250 million more in funding is available for special education, effective this school year, in order that the children who need special help can get it. It also indicated that in December 2002, our government announced that we would be increasing the funding on an annual basis to \$250 million. As the member knows, as a result the money has flowed to school boards as the

school boards requested in accordance with the ISA process.

Mr Kennedy: The minister has been found out. She made promises, the Premier made promises, their ads made promises, but they've been caught. An objective body says it carefully reviewed the complaint, the commercial and the response of the advertisers—presumably the information the minister gave today—and found there was inaccurate information being put forward by the government. So, Minister, you used inaccurate information in your ads, and worse, you waited until it was politically convenient to announce money for some of the most-in-need children in this province, children like nine-year-old Jesse at Humbercrest school in my riding, who is waiting today for a properly trained education assistant because you cut the amount of money that went to the Toronto board. You had applications for kids in wheelchairs, for kids who have been waiting for months. You said it was coming. The ad standards council independently has found that you didn't. Minister, will you cancel the ad and put the money back in services so kids like Jesse can get help?

Hon Mrs Witmer: The member knows full well that the government has indicated we would be providing \$250 million to those students who have special needs. He also knows that what happens is that for these individual students who require help, applications are made for funding. He also knows that our government has indicated we would be prepared to flow \$250 million. In fact next year, if there are more claims, the number could well be more; it could be less. The reality is that this funding, ladies and gentlemen, is based on the actual claims that are submitted. So everything in the ad was accurate. I'd like the member to know that the ministry will be appealing the decision based on—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I'm afraid the time is up for the minister.

1520

Mr Kennedy: Just as you've had a chance, your ministry had a chance to present the facts. I had a briefing from your ministry and they confirmed that you've only distributed a portion of this money, that you clawed back \$50 million. Your own ministry, in a briefing with your staff present, confirmed that.

There are children all around this province who have had fewer services offered to them—people like Barb Lee, who lives in the Kawartha-Pine Ridge area, who has two children who can't get speech pathology, who have syndromes that have been identified, who are waiting for services. Weeks and months are ticking by because you have other uses for the money that should go to their services.

You put an ad on the airwaves. You approved it. You took the money out of your budget for classrooms and you said it's more important to have pre-election ads. That's bad enough, but when you're found out, when you're caught by an independent body that the ads you put on the air are inaccurate, you should stand in this House and apologize to those families. You should

withdraw all your ads because they're all suspect, they're all wrong and they shouldn't be on the air.

Hon Mrs Witmer: The member opposite is making some very serious allegations. I would say to the member opposite that in his press release, he states that the ads repeated a claim made by the Premier and minister that \$250 million was distributed. He knows that is wrong. He talks about \$50 million being clawed back. He talks about lying—very serious allegations. The member knows full well that all the eligible claims that have been submitted have been funded. He obviously does not understand how the ISA process works. It works in response to the claims by school boards that are submitted. As the claims are submitted, the funding flows. So it will vary—

The Speaker: I'm afraid the minister's time is up. New question.

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): My question is also for the Deputy Premier. Your government has spent some 600,000 taxpayer dollars to run a 30-page brochure in Maclean's magazine and other media, singing the praises of the Tories. Here on page 9 is a glowing tribute from Roger and Terry Lavergne: "Roger has been a resident since the facility opened in 2001. 'They look after me very well,' he says."

Interjection.

Mr Crozier: I knew you'd react that way because you don't know their whole story. This also is about inaccurate advertising. I spoke with the Laverignes, even before this ad was out, because his wife had written to me. They have a very different opinion today. Here is what Terry Lavergne wrote to me. She said, "Since that interview, staff has been cut twice. We've been told to expect more cuts in October.... There are nails coming through the floor tiles, large holes in the wall. He just gets one bath per week."

I quote further, "Over the year that my husband has lived at Extendicare, our opinion of this brand new facility has changed drastically. I am very, very unhappy to have given any positive publicity to this abysmal situation."

Why have you betrayed Mr and Mrs Lavergne?

Hon Mrs Witmer: I will refer that to the Chair of Management Board.

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Culture): What I will say is this: we brought in standards for the very first time. Neither the Liberals nor the NDP found it necessary to adopt any type of policies to define the difference between partisan advertising and government advertising. We did, for the very first time.

Based on the recommendations from the auditor, we felt it was very important for us to define what's considered advertising, to define what is partisan material and to clearly describe the rules that must be taken for procurement of these contracts. So for the very first time, we brought in rules that define advertising. These folks over there never had it, so they really ran roughshod whenever they were in government.

We believe it's important to have that accountability, and for the very first time, we actually do.

Mr Crozier: Speaking of accountability, I would hope you would answer the question and direct it to the Laverignes, who are very concerned.

Your waste of taxpayer dollars on partisan ads, in my view, is simply terrible. But the betrayal of Mr and Mrs Lavergne is utterly disgusting.

Here's more of what Terry Lavergne wrote: "If I had known that the interview my husband and I gave about Extendicare long-term care last year would be published in Macleans, I would never have given it.

"At the time of the interview, I was trying to work within the health care system of long-term care, but today, I have completely given up in disgust."

I quote further: "I presume that the Ontario government paid Macleans magazine for all those pages of advertising disguised as reports. The money would have been better spent hiring more health care workers." And I couldn't agree with her more.

Why is it that you'll simply say anything, you'll do anything, just to get re-elected, instead of helping these people?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: I just explained the actual process of what had occurred, the fact that we finally brought in some accountability rules, which of course were never evident during either the Liberal or the NDP times. Frankly, with respect to any particulars dealing with various ministries, they really should be referred to that particular ministry. I'll talk about the process.

Now, if you want to talk about partisan advertising, which I assume is what the member is getting to, there are a number of instances here that I can point out. For example, here's a wonderful one. It's beautiful. It's not in colour; unfortunately, I don't have it in colour. It says, "Ministry of Natural Resources committed to forestry research." It's a tremendous piece. Of course it features the then minister at the time, Lyn McLeod.

There are a number of these examples that I have here. I have a coloured one, and that's your colleague who's sitting next to you. That's James Bradley. This is in colour.

This is a really interesting one. This is in both English and Chinese. That's the Minister of Citizenship, Gerry Phillips. At least Alvin didn't include his picture—

The Speaker: I'm afraid the minister's time is up. Final supplementary?

Mr Crozier: You know what, Minister? This isn't about the advertising and how you should go about it and what's partisan; it's about using somebody to benefit yourselves. You're wasting 50 million taxpayers' dollars on partisan advertising like this. Every dollar that you spend on partisan advertising is a dollar less in the classroom, a dollar less for waste inspectors, a dollar less for home care and care for the long-term ill.

I'm confident that we will, in fact, now that you've mentioned us, implement Dalton McGuinty's bill to ban self-promotional government partisan advertising, and that goes beyond politics.

Deputy Premier, I think that you owe—

Interjections.

Mr Crozier: Just wait a second. I'm only asking for something small here, but it'll count. I think that you owe Roger Lavergne and his wife, Terry, an apology. Your government cynically exploited these people, and those were her words. They were promised quality care that was never delivered. They were promised dignity, and you've robbed them of that. Will you at the very least apologize to the Laverignes?

The Speaker: The member's time is up. Minister?
1530

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: It's just quite amazing how these questions tend to evolve as the answers are supplied. Originally, the point the member was trying to make was partisan advertising. Clearly, when I held up examples of partisan advertising when they were in government, they didn't like that. Now the question has kind of shifted, so let me bring some more context here, if I could. If we look at advertising in general, the average amount of spending on advertising, adjusted for inflation, for the Liberals annually was \$80.1 million; for the NDP, the average yearly spending was \$70.1 million; and for the Tories, \$63.9 million.

Having said that, sometimes the Liberals don't recognize advertising as advertising. When Greg Sorbara was the labour minister and he was confronted with advertising, he said it wasn't advertising, it was an information clip. So advertising is not even advertising to you guys.

WATER QUALITY

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): My question is for the Deputy Premier. I want to talk to you today about safe drinking water and safe food on this, the third anniversary of the Walkerton tragedy. The Toronto Star recently revealed that there were 533 bad water reports from drinking water systems throughout Ontario last year. The environment ministry reports 40% of water systems in Ontario are out of compliance. Yet you have not spent the over \$200 million that you allocated for sewer and water projects—over \$200 million, Minister.

I want to ask you: on this, the third anniversary of Walkerton, why in God's name have you left so many municipalities with dangerous water systems in this province?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Deputy Premier, Minister of Education): I'll refer that to the Minister of the Environment.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): Let's be clear about the bad water reporting. First of all, this is not a new phenomenon. In the past number of years, there have often been bad water reports, boil-water alerts and so on that have taken place in the province of Ontario. What we are doing is testing more often and discovering bad water reports more often, which is a good thing. It's a good thing to first establish what the problem is and make sure that the water you're providing the taxpayers and resi-

dents of this province is in fact clean. I am alarmed whenever we get a bad water report, but I also feel a comfort level in knowing that we're testing more often than any administration did in the past and we're discovering bad water alerts where possibly they wouldn't have been discovered in the past.

With respect to investments, my friend across the floor, you should know that we have committed to invest \$750 million in clean, safe drinking water. In fact, we have spent or committed more than \$1.2 billion for safe drinking water and sewer and water initiatives. I have met with AMO; I have met with the officials in the provincial ministry. We have worked with them to develop these pieces of legislation, endorsed by the Association of Municipalities of Ontario. I think we've done a bang-up job. Rather than ask that question, you should be applauding us.

Ms Churley: The minister is saying they're doing the testing. What they're finding out is that there are bad water reports, and they're not doing anything about it. I wouldn't applaud for that.

There have been over 500 boil-water orders over the past year in this province. You have failed to fulfil the recommendations of the Walkerton inquiry. You have completed only 16 of 121 recommendations, by your own admission, Minister. Worse, we have obtained a copy of a cabinet document showing that you may delay until 2016 implementing the nutrient management regulations for 97% of farms. That's 16 years after the Walkerton tragedy. We know that farmers are working hard to protect the waterways, but delaying these rules for so long opens the door to more hog factories and potential contamination of our water.

Minister, will you agree today to pass my Ontario Drinking Water Source Protection Act so our drinking water is protected in this province?

Hon Mr Stockwell: First of all, that bill that you introduced, and the previous bill, were so flimsy; they're so inadequate. I had to redraft that thing. We had to work on that and put some meat on those bones so we could actually put something in place that was legitimate.

As far as the O'Connor report is concerned, we've implemented a lot of the O'Connor report; 60 or 70 recommendations have been implemented. But do you want to know what recommendations I'm most proud of? I'm most proud of the fact that we refused to grandfather operators of filtration systems. Do you know why? Because you grandfathered those folks and you allowed the Koebel brothers to operate in this province. We changed that. That's what I'm most proud of, that people like the Koebel brothers will never operate in the province of Ontario again.

Ms Churley: What disingenuous piffle. That's absolute nonsense. We're discussing the third anniversary of Walkerton here and you stand up with that kind of nonsense. The people of Ontario just heard how many systems are not operating cleanly in this province and you stand up with that nonsense.

I want to know why the minister has not spent that \$200 million that was specifically set aside to fix danger-

ous water systems in this province so we will not have another Walkerton. That is what this is all about.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I take great exception to the "piffle" comment. I think this government has moved swiftly, accurately and has spent a significant amount of money on the O'Connor report. I think we have worked very hard to implement the O'Connor report. I think it was a tragedy in Walkerton. We all know the tragedy in Walkerton took place, and we're working to ensure it doesn't happen again.

We also all know that the tragedy in Walkerton had many components, and many administrations were involved in those components. I will say this: I haven't wasted my breath spending time going back over previous administrations. We all have responsibilities. We are working to put a better water system in this province: we have spent money, we have invested time, we have passed legislation, and we have committed to the people of this province that we will have the cleanest water in the world. I will add, which is significant to me, that we have done this over the protests and obstructionist tactics of the opposition. We're proud of our record, and we do have the cleanest water in the world.

WEST NILE VIRUS

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a question for the Minister of Health. At a briefing this morning, you were asked what you are doing to prepare doctors and nurses to deal with West Nile. Frankly, the answer that was given was completely inadequate. Family doctors, nurses and hospitals should all have information and directives in their hands now telling them what symptoms they should be on active alert for, when those symptoms should be reported and to whom. In conversations we've had with family doctors, infectious disease experts and chiefs of microbiology at hospitals in both Toronto and Ottawa, it's clear that no one has received any directives or protocols from your ministry regarding West Nile. What are you waiting for, Minister, the outbreak to actually occur?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): That's just not true. This virus has been in this province for the last two years. There have certainly been a lot of occasions when information about symptoms and treatment has been shared with family physicians, public health authorities and our hospitals. Many hospitals already have experience treating the West Nile virus, unfortunately, but factually that is true. Certainly all the information we have available and all the information that is clinically available is shared.

Ms Martel: I repeat that the family doctors, the infectious disease experts and the chiefs of microbiology in hospitals in both Ottawa and Toronto with whom we spoke today confirm they have not received one protocol or directive from you regarding how to deal with West Nile. This is important, because we know that yesterday a dead crow infected with West Nile was reported in Ottawa. That means human infection is, regrettably, not far behind.

Last year, health care providers were told to look out for encephalitis-like symptoms that might mean West Nile. This year, they should be told to be on active alert for fever and rash, for symptoms similar to polio or for viral meningitis, but no one we have spoken to in hospitals or family doctor practices have said they received any protocol or directive from your ministry on what to look for, what to be on active alert for, whom to report to or what to do after that.

Minister, I say to you, it's your responsibility to be preparing health care providers for West Nile. When are you going to do that?

1540

Hon Mr Clement: Two things. First of all, she asked them about protocols. She should know that protocols are only a function of a provincial emergency situation, so if you ask them specifically about protocols, the answer is going to be no, because there is no provincial emergency. If the honourable member thinks it is the Minister of Health's responsibility to tell doctors how to be doctors and to tell nurses how to be nurses, perhaps that would be the way it would work under an NDP government, but we on this side of the House have confidence in our doctors, confidence in our nurses, confidence in their education and confidence in their training. We know they will do the job for the people of Ontario.

WALKERTON TRAGEDY

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a question for the Attorney General. Minister, three years ago this week the town of Walkerton was in agony. In Walkerton, the people's stomachs were twisted with pain, their children were growing weak and dehydrated, and they were drinking more of the water that made them sick. The people of Walkerton expected the system to protect them, but it failed.

Three years later, the system is failing those families again. Every adult in Walkerton got \$6,000 in compensation after the tragedy, but people suffering to this very day from the E coli they drank are still waiting for the rest of the compensation they were promised. For these people the disaster didn't end with the raising of the well-water advisory or the reports from Justice O'Connor. It is with them every day.

Your predecessor, Jim Flaherty, said the following: "This is about doing the right thing. Obviously, it's going to take millions of dollars, but we're going to do what it takes." Minister, why are the people of Walkerton still waiting for the full and adequate compensation promised to them to overcome their illnesses?

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): Under the settlement, a court oversees the operation of the plan, including the activities of the administrator, the mediators and the arbitrators. That independent court has appointed a claims adjusting firm, Crawford Adjusters Canada, who are taking care of the claims on a one-by-one basis and are working through them. According to the adjusters,

more than \$15 million had been issued in stage 1 claims as of the end of April of this year. Stage 1 refers to a minimum payment of \$2,000. More than 9,000 applicants have been approved for stage 1. Those individuals who believe their losses exceeded the \$2,000 minimum can apply for stage 2. Stage 2 payments will vary according to the type of compensation claimed. Crawford's records as of April 28, 2003, indicate the payment for stage 2 claims averages about \$2,100 per person for minor illness.

We're working on it. We'll continue to work on it.

Mr Bradley: Minister, there are people in Walkerton who have suffered from irritable bowel syndrome every day for the past three years. Their colon will spasm or block up. They are in pain. Others suffer from reactive arthritis from the E coli. Their joints are stiff and painful. It can also make the eyes light-sensitive. In arbitration, people with irritable bowel syndrome or reactive arthritis are being told \$3,000 will cover their three years of suffering—\$3,000 to help them live with a condition that could continue to plague them for the rest of their lives.

Minister, the people of Walkerton suffered horribly three years ago. Many of them are still suffering today. This pittance in compensation is an insult, many of them believe. Premier Harris said, "The people of Walkerton should not have to go to court to get the help they need. The important thing is to get money in their hands promptly. We can sort out the legal issues later." Minister, when will you ensure that the people of Walkerton don't have to come begging for compensation to your government, the compensation Premier Harris promised them?

Hon Mr Sterling: It should be noted, first of all, that this compensation plan was offered to all the people of Walkerton without any hesitation by the government of Ontario. Secondly, as the member who is questioning points out, the individual situation from person to person, from household to household, differs greatly, depending upon whatever sickness those people would have suffered. Therefore, it's necessary to go through those particular claims—and there are many of them, as I said in my previous answer—on a one-by-one basis, making certain that those people who suffered the greatest received the greatest compensation.

To date, we have paid out more than \$21 million in stage 2 payments, as well as the \$15 million that we have paid out in stage 1. This government has been most generous with regard to compensating the people of Walkerton for this terrible tragedy.

DRINKING AND DRIVING

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): My question is for the Minister of Transportation. Minister, last weekend was Victoria Day weekend, and police across the province were on the lookout for drunk drivers and other offenders. In fact, in my hometown of north Perth in Listowel, a driver was charged with impaired driving and driving a motor vehicle with open liquor, among other

things. I believe all residents are very lucky that this driver was stopped before he caused an accident, because he was pulled over after being clocked doing 156 kilometres in an 80 zone.

Despite the well-known dangers of impaired driving, there are still those who drink, get behind the wheel and drive—a deadly combination.

Minister, we know that drinking and driving is unacceptable. How will your ministry ensure that this message gets through to everyone?

Hon Frank Klees (Minister of Transportation): I thank the honourable member for his question. I'm pleased to report to this House and to the people of Ontario that this government has done more to fight drinking and driving than any other government in the history of Ontario.

Since 1995, fatalities from drinking and driving have actually been reduced by 25%, that in face of the fact that there are thousands more vehicles and thousands more drivers in the province. But there's much more to be done. Two hundred and four people lost their lives in 2001 through drinking and driving. That's unacceptable.

So this past Victoria Day weekend, I joined with the Premier to announce that we would be introducing legislation soon that, if passed, will result in even stiffer penalties against drinking and driving in this province, lifetime suspensions for all second-time drinking and driving offences, as well as impoundment of vehicles for those caught drinking and driving.

In this game, in this province, two strikes and you're out. That's the message we want to send: you don't drink and drive in the province of Ontario.

Mr Johnson: I thank the minister for his response. It's reassuring to know that the government is committed to wiping out drinking and driving and that new, tougher legislation is forthcoming. I do commend all groups for their dedication, hard work and contribution in getting the message across that drinking and driving is unacceptable, especially our police officers and Mothers Against Drunk Driving, MADD.

However, despite stricter penalties and higher fines, there are still those who continue to drink and drive. Minister, I want you to stand in your place today and tell me what actions your ministry is taking now to remove these criminals from our roads and, to the extent possible, prevent them from driving drunk again and eliminate the tragedy to many victims' families of impaired driving.

Hon Mr Klees: I'm glad to respond to that. In addition to tough penalties and the highest fines in North America, we introduced the ignition interlock system, mandatory in cars for individuals who have in fact been convicted of drinking and driving. I would remind members of the House that this valuable initiative resulted from legislation brought forward by the member for Simcoe North. Last December, the first ignition interlock service centres opened in Ottawa, Toronto, Scarborough, London, Sudbury, Thunder Bay and Mississauga. We continue to expand this program throughout Ontario. Seven new facilities have now been opened in Barrie,

Kitchener, Chatham, St Catharines, Kingston, Peterborough and Etobicoke.

We're going to continue to work with our road safety partners. We want to get the message across very clearly that drinking and driving does not mix in the province of Ontario.

I might add that not only is it drinking alcohol but it's doing drugs which also causes impaired driving. Shame on the federal government for considering introducing a law that would legalize marijuana in this province. It's absolutely inappropriate.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I move unanimous consent that this House sit through the weekend to consider the back-to-work legislation for the Catholic separate school board in Toronto and that we debate it.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is there unanimous consent? I'm afraid I heard some noes.

1550

WOMEN'S SHELTERS

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain): I have a question for the minister responsible for women's issues. The Social Planning and Research Council released a report yesterday that stated Hamilton shelters had to turn away twice as many homeless and abused women last year as they did in 1999. In 2002, all the shelters in Hamilton had turned away desperate women over 2,300 times, and the use of local homeless shelters has tripled since 1995. Homeless and abused women are being turned away every night because of a lack of available beds.

Women are forced to seek refuge in shelters because of a lack of options. Social assistance rates and the minimum wage have remained unchanged. Funding to transitional housing is almost non-existent and there's a significantly long wait for affordable housing. In 2002, the number of households waiting for social housing in Hamilton had increased to over 4,200, and the majority of people waiting were women. You even agreed that more is needed to be done to ensure the provision of emergency supports. Minister, I'm asking you, why are thousands of women turned away in their time of need?

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, minister responsible for women's issues): At the women's directorate there are two goals, and I know the House shares them: (1) to stop the violence, and (2) to work as best we can toward young women thinking about and attaining women's economic independence. On the issue of shelters, the member opposite will know that we have actually renovated a number of shelters in the province in the last couple of years. In many areas there have been applications for and permission given in order to build new shelters. It's an area this government has taken very seriously. I actually don't get letters from shelters telling me they need a lot more assistance. We are responding in

a planned way to building more shelters and renovating existing beds right across this province.

Mrs Bountrogianni: Minister, women who are fleeing for their lives hardly have the time or the energy to write you letters, but advocates on their behalf have come here. As representatives, both opposition parties have come to you to say that the Provincial Auditor actually said we are failing women and children fleeing violence. Two years ago, the Provincial Auditor stated that. A year later, 2,300 women were turned away from shelters in Hamilton. On this side of the House, we respect the Provincial Auditor's opinion because we respect accountability. I'm proud to say that under a Dalton McGuinty government we would reinstate funding to second-stage housing, which would free up spaces in shelters. We will address the root of the frustration that often leads to family violence by increasing the minimum wage and we will build affordable housing.

Minister, I plead with you, on behalf of these women who don't have the strength to write to you, to plead with your Premier to implement these policies. Women and children are waiting.

Hon Mrs Cunningham: We too on this side of the House, and hopefully with the support of our opposition partners, consider this to be a particularly non-partisan issue. Violence against women is a crime. We've long been committed to helping prevent domestic violence. We've made substantial improvements to Ontario's system of supports for victims right across nine ministries. I've had this job for seven out of eight years and I can tell you that we have committed more resources to address violence against women since taking office than any previous government. In fact, expenditures have increased by about 70% since 1995. I will also tell you that on the issue of shelters we could go into the numbers, but every member in this House knows that we have improved shelters over the years, but specifically since 2002. We have announced some \$26 million to support improvement to shelters and new—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I'm afraid the minister's time is up.

INVESTOR PROTECTION

Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South): I have a question for the Minister of Finance. As the minister knows, the impetus for this question is the grim experience of my constituent while carrying out her duties as a director of a public company. Witnessing what she believed to be securities violations, my constituent took her observations to the Ontario Securities Commission and its counterpart in another province. Little did she realize that she would be involved in a lengthy, stressful and extremely expensive battle. My constituent has not only borne large costs but has also lost her investment in the company in question.

Minister, what is the Ontario government doing to improve investor protection and, in particular, to help so-

called whistle-blowers carry out their duties without undue repercussions?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Finance): Having strong markets here in Ontario, having investors know they can invest their money safely and have the information they need to make good decisions is part of our economic plan for keeping growth and jobs going in Ontario.

Last fall we introduced new rules, new laws, to better protect investors in Ontario. In April we proclaimed those provisions. They are provisions for tougher fines, more prison terms, more openness and transparency in terms of accounts, making directors responsible for the financial statements of their companies and forcing those who have been found guilty of insider trading, for example, to give up their ill-gotten gains, so we can protect those who have been victims of this.

We also have the final report of the review of securities legislation coming forward. This will be one of the issues that I think needs to be looked at.

Mrs Marland: One very frustrating aspect of my constituent's experience was the involvement of two jurisdictions with different laws, regulations and enforcement agencies. She had to make numerous trips and deal with mountains of paperwork as her case went through separate proceedings in two provinces. Obviously this factor added hugely to the cost and complexity of her case. The fact that the two provincial regulators reached vastly different conclusions about the company in question only emphasizes the need for a national system of securities regulation.

Minister, what can our government do so that Ontario's investors do not have to deal with a complicated patchwork of regulators and regulations?

Hon Mrs Ecker: I guess the member's question underlines the importance of having one national securities regulation system in Canada, because right now there are 13. For a market of this size, it simply makes no sense at all. We are working with the other provinces on two projects: first, to have more uniform securities legislation, to see if we can find common ground between all the jurisdictions; and second, to look at different models for a national system. There will be consultation occurring on that, probably later this spring.

The other project the Ontario government has been supportive of is the Wise Persons' Committee, as it is called, which is consulting with the sector to again make recommendations about how we can move to a national securities system in Canada—a very important step for future economic prosperity.

SITE OF FIRST PARLIAMENT

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): My question is to the Minister of Culture. Back in December last year you made the following statement in this House about the first Parliament becoming a Porsche dealership: "It's one of these sites that you have one opportunity in a lifetime to save." Well, it hasn't been saved. The lawyer acting for the Porsche dealership says that no negotia-

tions have taken place since March. The bulldozers are lining up around the site as we speak. It needs intervention from you and from the Premier. Will you save our history, will you save our heritage and will you save the first Parliament site?

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Culture): Let's take a look at some of the sequence of events here. First of all, the city of Toronto approached the government. As you know, under the Planning Act, they have the first response to any type of historical site. They approached the government and we agreed to work with them to try to find some solutions for what we all consider a very important first Parliament site.

Bearing in mind that the city of Toronto has no money—they approached us earlier in the year for a bailout of between \$60 million to \$70 million—we took that into consideration. We advanced a number of options that would not require the city of Toronto to advance any money at all. Could we get the city of Toronto to agree to that? No, we couldn't. The problem is, we can't get their co-operation to come forward with a solution.

It really bugs me, to tell the truth, to see Councillor McConnell out there on the weekend. She is part of the problem, in my opinion. She's in the way. She has refused to advance the city of Toronto to the point where we can work with them. We have a number of options we're still working on right now, hopefully with or without the city of Toronto—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I'm afraid the minister's time is up.

1600

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): Do you want me to do business of the week?

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The minister could do that, if he'd like.

Hon Mr Stockwell: The business for next week is TBA.

Interjections.

Hon Mr Stockwell: For those who didn't understand, the business for next week is to be announced.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

2003 ONTARIO BUDGET

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 21, 2003, on the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): It only seems like a few minutes ago that I was standing here—about 9:20 last night—when I got rudely interrupted by the Minister of Energy and chief government whip, who

doesn't seem to understand that it's the opposition's job to call for a quorum in this place, to make sure they're actually on their—

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): He's practising.

Mr Martin: Yes, he's practising for when he gets over to this side after the next election. It's your job to keep a quorum in this House, and it's our job to make sure you're doing that. The Minister of Energy and chief government whip has that kind of backwards. I guess it was late at night, perhaps he had been drinking—I'm not sure. Anyway, he got it a little twisted around. He very rudely got in the way of me challenging this government with regard to the budget it brought forward. It might have had something to do with the fact that I was really—

Hon Doug Galt (Minister without Portfolio): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I acknowledge that the Minister of Energy did call for a quorum, but certainly the chief government whip didn't. I was busy getting our members in. I resent being included in that.

Mr Martin: I guess it's starting all over again. This government doesn't like it when members of the public or members of the opposition get up and challenge them or are critical in any way of their agenda or what they bring before this House, particularly something as important as the budget. We know how they feel about that. Everybody knows now that they delivered the budget at Magna International's training centre, away from this place, to an invited list of guests, so that they could spin it and make it sound like the greatest thing since sliced bread.

Well, here we are this afternoon, with at least some opportunity, if the government members over there will allow me to finish my speech, to actually to put on the record some of our concerns where this budget is concerned, and some of our concerns in terms of what this budget says about the agenda and priorities of this government where communities, individuals, families and people across this province are concerned.

Last night, I was talking about the fact there was nothing in this budget to give communities like Wawa any relief whatsoever—any solace, any hope whatsoever—from their very difficult struggle with the escalating price of hydro and the impact it's having on their industry, on their businesses and on their individual lives. This government doesn't seem to understand at all that they're having this problem and that this problem flows directly from a decision by this government to deregulate and privatize hydro that started on May 1 last year.

This small community has been one of the more important, thriving, vital and viable towns in this province over the last 40 or 50 years, and gave rise to all kinds of interesting and important personalities in the province, one of them being myself. I grew up in Wawa. I actually packed and carried out groceries and stocked shelves in the grocery store that is now ready to close down in that town because they cannot get the ear of this government. They cannot get the Minister of Energy to

call them back, to respond to their invite to have a meeting, to sit down and talk with them about these very real issues. It's not included in the budget, either.

The Minister of Energy was up in high dudgeon the other day, asking members of the community of Toronto to call my colleague here because of the labour relations dispute between the teachers and the school board. He was giving out her phone number, so this afternoon I'm giving a phone number for the Minister of Energy. People who think the Minister of Energy should sit down and have a meeting with the people of Wawa, who should honour that long-standing democratic tradition of ministers who have responsibilities sitting down with constituents and people in the province who are affected directly and negatively by their decisions, should call the minister. I think people in Wawa for sure, and people out there all over the place, should be calling the minister because Wawa, as we've said so often in this place now, has become the canary in the coal mine. What's happening in Wawa is already happening, but it will happen in the same significant, important and damaging way to every community across this province if this agenda is allowed to go forward. If we just sit here and allow this budget to become what governs the financial dealings and decisions that are made in this province over the next year, you will see the deregulation and privatization of Hydro take more and more grip, become more and more rooted in your community will be affected as well.

So I'm asking people across the province to call Minister John Baird at 416-325-6351. That's the Minister of Energy, John Baird, who used to be the Minister of Community and Social Services. And we remember when he was the Minister of Community and Social Services and the kind of damage he did to families, to poor and vulnerable people, and to people with disabilities across this province. Again, not willing to listen, not willing to hear, not willing to sit down and have meetings with people who advocate on behalf of the poor in this province so that he might understand by way of their arguments the impacts his decisions were having on them. This is the same minister who, after whacking the poor, the vulnerable and the at-risk, and families and people across this province, is now whacking communities, industries, businesses, families and individuals with his energy policies. When will it ever stop? We should call him the Minister of Whacking, or the Whacking Minister, or the Whacky Minister, or whatever. We should be calling a spade a spade here. This minister obviously has no sensitivity, no concern, no interest in doing anything except driving his agenda and the agenda of this government and doing whatever it takes, and not having meetings with people so they can sit down and talk to him.

The Minister of Finance came to Sault Ste Marie for one of her infamous community meetings before she released the budget at Magna. A very focused and narrow list of invitees to that meeting, most of them probably card-carrying members of the Tory party, most of them belonging to the chamber of commerce—and I'm not

casting aspersions on the chamber of commerce here. I'm just saying that the Minister of Finance thinks that, if she gets the green light and the OK from Bay Street and chambers of commerce from across the province, everybody else is going to be OK, that this agenda is going to be OK for every community, every family and every individual across this province.

Then she came back and invited a smaller group of those folks to this meeting at Magna and released her budget. I suggest to you that there was probably nobody from Wawa invited to that meeting, nobody from the power group invited so they could sit down at that meeting and share what the impact of the decision to deregulate and privatize Hydro is having on that little town of Wawa. I'm absolutely certain that they didn't. Nor did the Minister of Energy, in trying to give advice to the minister, come up with proposals, plans or programs that might mitigate some of the damage as concerned the Minister of Finance in releasing her budget, so that he could work on behalf of them to make sure there was something in the budget that would respond to their very real and very troubling challenges and concerns.

1610

People should call Mr Baird. People from Wawa, people from across Algoma, the area that is serviced by Great Lakes Power and Brascan for their energy, from Echo Bay, from St Joseph Island, people from across northern Ontario, because it's resource-based industries, eventually and ultimately, that will be hurt the most. The jobs they represent and the communities they support will be hurt very directly and in a very big way if this decision to deregulate and privatize hydro continues in this province.

So they should be calling Mr Baird at his office, 416-325-6351. People should be calling him and letting him know what they think about his nonchalant attitude, his not wanting to meet with the people of Wawa so that we can stop it there, where the canary in the coal mine is choking on the gases that have been produced by this decision, and tell him to get that right. If he gets that right, then he'll have a formula or a program that he can then bring in and introduce to everybody else in the province.

I also wanted to suggest last night—and again it's indirectly connected to decisions made by the infamous Minister Baird when he was the Minister of Community and Social Services in the province—the impact this government's agenda is having on the lives of those who are most vulnerable and at risk in our communities across the province; the fact that when they came into power in 1995, the first thing they did was remove 22% of the income of the poorest of our citizens. Then, not long after that, they began to cut back on the services that supported those individuals.

Then I found out, in travelling the province with my People's Parliament on Poverty, that they were actually clawing back the child tax benefit supplement, that money that the federal government was giving to some of the poorest families to eradicate child poverty. This gov-

ernment decided in its wisdom that those folks who are at the mercy of government, collecting assistance of one sort or another from the province, shouldn't get that money. We're not talking about the adults here, although I think the adults are just as worthy and deserving of that money to look after themselves. Most people who are on welfare or collecting social assistance in this province are there for very legitimate and real reasons and deserve to have a quality of life that we, particularly in this place, so often take for granted. But this government decided that the \$100 or thereabouts that would be available to them through the federal government's new child tax benefit supplement should be clawed back.

There's nothing in this budget to suggest that they've heard the literally thousands of people—and I have a petition that I was going to introduce to the Legislature here today saying, "Stop the clawback," but we didn't get to petitions.

We've tabled probably 10,000 names on petitions from every community across this province that has concerns with regard to the impact of decisions by this government to take away 21.6% of the income of the poorest of our citizens, to claw back the little bit of money that the federal government was going to deliver to them by way of the child tax benefit supplement. There are so many other things that they've taken away by way of supports and services that were at one time available to poor people in the province of Ontario.

As a matter of fact, if you think I'm the only one who has a concern about this, I want to share with you that there are many municipalities across the province that have passed many resolutions in objection to the clawback, in objection to the reduction in the amount of money that people on social assistance get, in objection to those things that caused the very tragic death of Kimberly Rogers in this province.

Here's one that I have here that I had delivered to my office just the other day from the community of Kingston. It says, "This will confirm that Kingston city council at its regular meeting held on April 15, 2003, approved the following resolution, being clause 2, report number 43."

This is input that I want to give to the Minister of Finance here this afternoon, that she should have been looking for before she delivered her budget, because there's absolutely nothing in it that reflects that she has heard from communities like Kingston, London, North Bay and other communities that have passed similar resolutions.

It goes like this:

"Whereas social assistance benefits were cut by 21.6% in 1995 and are insufficient to meet basic needs; and there have been no adjustments to social assistance benefits since 1995; and the cost of living has increased by 15.5%, with the result that the purchasing power of Ontario Works ... benefits has declined by 40%—purchasing power has declined for those most vulnerable and at-risk citizens in our communities by 40%—"and the purchasing power of the Ontario disability support program ... benefits has declined by 15.5%; and

"Whereas increasing the basic needs portion of social assistance would relieve the pressure on over-extended community support services such as food banks, which were set up to be temporary rather than permanent services; and

"Whereas increasing the purchasing power for the approximately 674,000 people on Ontario Works and Ontario disability support program across Ontario would have a positive impact on the local economy and indexing the basic needs portion of social assistance would slow the growth of poverty in Ontario; and

"Whereas rent levels in Kingston (as measured by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp) ... have increased and the vacancy rate has fallen, and social assistance shelter allowance rates are insufficient to cover housing costs, with the result that our municipality is facing increased costs in shelter services, rent banks and other support services; and

"Whereas several hundred citizens of Kingston have signed petitions endorsing the 'Feed the Kids and Pay the Rent' Campaign, together with 22 community, social services, housing, faith and justice groups have also endorsed this campaign;

"Therefore be it resolved that the city of Kingston call on the provincial government to (1) restore the 21.6% cut to the basic needs portion of Ontario Works, (2) raise the shelter allowance portion of the Ontario Works and Ontario disability support program benefits to the average rent level of each region of Ontario, as determined by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp, (3) index the basic needs portion of the Ontario Works and the Ontario disability support program benefits to the cost of living; and

"Be it further resolved that a copy of this resolution be sent to the Premier of Ontario; the Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services; the Minister of Finance...."

This is the municipality of Kingston raising some very real, sincere and genuine concerns where the interests of poor and vulnerable people are concerned that obviously the Minister of Finance didn't hear, didn't want to hear, doesn't understand or doesn't care anything about.

Again I say, if you have a concern about this, I would suggest that you give the Minister of Energy a call because he used to be the Minister of Community and Social Services and probably has some influence on the Minister of Finance. You can give him both messages. Tell him you're concerned about the program on de-regulating and privatizing hydro and you're concerned about the impact of decisions he made and that this government continues to support where poor people are concerned. His phone number again is 416-325-6351. Phone him. Everybody out there, phone him every minute. Fax him even, if you can get his fax number. You want the phone number again? It's 416-325-6351. That's the Minister of Energy, who used to be the Minister of Community and Social Services. I'm sure he has influence, and he'll be able to tell—

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): One more time just to make sure everybody has it.

Mr Martin: One more time? OK. It's 416-325-6351.

Interjection.

Mr Martin: Maybe the member from Kitchener would want to call his colleague the Minister of Energy and tell him, "Back off. Whoa." This is killing Wawa, and not only Wawa but other communities across this province and people across this province. While you're at it, Minister of Energy, talk to your friend the Minister of Finance and tell her that you're sorry, you made a mistake when you were the Minister of Community and Social Services, you didn't mean to impose all those very difficult conditions on the very vulnerable and at-risk in our communities, and you should change that too and give them back their 21.6% and stop clawing back the child tax benefit supplement and bring back those support programs that were in place in 1995 when you took over as government.

It's not just the community of Kingston that we're concerned about here. I was up in Attawapiskat in February.

Hon Tim Hudak (Minister of Consumer and Business Services): I've been to Attawapiskat.

Mr Martin: I don't know, when you were up there, if you talked to the same people I did or not, but 80% of the people up there are unemployed. They're on social assistance. The 21.6% that you took away from people on social assistance across this province in 1995 affected them as well. They lost almost a quarter of their income. Do you know what that means for that community, in terms of cash inflow and the local economy? What has happened there is tragic. Not only that, but in talking to some of the families and some of the parents trying to look after children, they are having the child tax benefit supplement clawed back. So money that could be in their pocket to feed their children and contribute to the local economy, and be circulated in the small businesses that are up there, is being taken out of that community and put into the general revenue of the province of Ontario so that they, as we've seen in this budget from the Minister of Finance that she talked about last night, can give more tax breaks to their friends and benefactors out there, those who at the end of the day—particularly when you compare them to the people of Wawa, the people of Kingston and the poor people up in Attawapiskat, who need it more, who cannot get the services and the support they need.

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Let me tell you what's happening in Attawapiskat to give you a little hint of what Mr Hudak perhaps should have got up in the House and talked about when he came back. They have lost 21.6% of their income—80% of the people up there. They get the child tax benefit supplement clawed back and yet they have to pay on average three times as much for their food, their clothing and all the other basics of life in Attawapiskat.

Let's just look at one thing that really blew me away. They drink a lot of Carnation milk. Because they're so

far away and they have so many transportation issues, they've got to haul in cases of Carnation milk to feed themselves and their children. A case of Carnation milk in Timmins is \$29.99. A case of Carnation milk in Moosonee, which is up the line by train, is \$49.99. Do you know what a case of Carnation milk costs in Attawapiskat? It's a hundred bucks—\$99.99. Do you know how much that is out of the social assistance cheque for most of those people? That's it, probably almost their whole cheque.

In Attawapiskat, they're not even talking about paying their rent or their hydro. They're trying to get enough money to pay for food to feed their children. That's what's going on up there. It's a pretty desperate circumstance, one that needs to be addressed and that this Parliament needs to know about and needs to be willing to do something about.

The Minister of Finance in her budget should have indicated some program of relief, should have done something with the billions of dollars they're generating now in this province by way of the tax—

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre): The Speaker is standing.

Mr Martin: Sorry, I didn't see you standing, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): It's not only that I'm standing, I'm standing for a reason, and that is that your time has expired.

Further debate?

Mr Wettlaufer: Tax cuts are good for Ontario residents. Our tax cuts are saving the average family hundreds and thousands of dollars a year, and our tax cuts are creating an environment in which more than a million new jobs have been created since this government's first throne speech eight years ago.

Our government has put in place a multi-year tax reduction plan to support growth and prosperity. Our past tax cuts, combined with the further reductions proposed in this year's budget, would benefit individuals and businesses by \$16 billion a year in 2003-04.

Every one of our budgets has reduced taxes. Let me repeat that: every one of our budgets has reduced taxes.

Legislation already in place fulfills the government's commitment to completing its additional 20% reduction in personal income tax by January 1 next year. So far, Ontario's personal income tax cuts are providing \$12 billion in benefits to all individual taxpayers this year. Personal income tax cuts are part of our pro-growth plan to promote economic development and financial security, which allows us to make further investments in our priorities like health care and education.

Let me give you an example of how tax cuts are working for Ontario families. A family of four with \$60,000 in net income from two earners is already benefiting from \$2,125 in Ontario income tax savings this year. Let me repeat that: a family of four with \$60,000 in net income from two earners is already benefiting from \$2,125 in Ontario income tax savings this year.

Interjection: Repeat that.

Mr Wettlaufer: I did repeat it. That \$2,125 can buy appliances for a new house. It can buy four or five appli-

ances for that new house, or for a new condominium. By next year those tax savings will have risen to more than \$2,500. As well, we propose to eliminate Ontario personal income tax for more people with modest incomes. Again I want to repeat that: we propose to eliminate Ontario personal income tax for more people with modest incomes. The 2003 budget's proposal to enrich the Ontario tax reduction program would increase to 700,000 the number of people no longer paying Ontario income tax as a result of our government's personal income tax cuts since 1995.

So take that, I say to the NDP, you who think you have a monopoly on compassion. We are the ones who have removed the modest-income families from paying Ontario income tax. Clearly tax cuts are good for economic growth and prosperity and consideration of the low income. Our record has proved that time and again.

Our government continues to focus on its long-term plan for competitive tax rates. We sought advice on a new, multi-year tax reduction plan that included the next steps toward eliminating Ontario's income tax surtax. As most of you know, this tax is the extra tax that reduces the province's attractiveness for mobile professionals and managers to work and invest. Beginning January 1, 2004, the surtax will be eliminated for those who pay only the first tier. The 2003 budget proposes to raise the surtax threshold effective January 1, 2005, so that the lowest income person paying the surtax would have taxable income of about \$75,000.

This government believes that eliminating the surtax would improve Ontario's ability to attract and retain skilled workers and increase incentives for investors. These skilled workers we are talking about are the workers that you see at plants like Budd Automotive, middle-income earners who are making \$70,000 and \$75,000 a year, workers at Budd Automotive—a factory—who support me.

Lower taxes are equally important to Ontario's small and medium-sized businesses, the backbone of our economy. We will continue to lower their taxes as well. We will do this by lowering the small business tax rate from the current level of 5.5% to 4% on January 1, 2005. Small businesses are the businesses that create 60% of the jobs in Ontario. What this means is that more money will be left in the hands of more than 125,000 businesses to invest and to create more jobs.

A significant factor in the resilience and flexibility of our economy is this government's focus on cutting taxes. We have shown that cutting taxes invigorates an economy. It gives both entrepreneurs and employees the incentive they need to expand, invest and create jobs. We know for a fact that lower small business taxes create jobs. Between the period 1990 and 1995, under higher taxes, Ontario's small and medium-sized businesses laid off a net 69,000 workers. I know the member for Lincoln Centre knows that all too well, because his government was in power. That was a recession created in Ontario. It was a Canadian recession created in large part because this province was no longer creating jobs and was no

longer the engine of the country's economy. Between 1995 and 2002, with lower taxes, small and medium-sized businesses have hired 478,000 net new workers.

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We will continue to reduce the general corporate income tax rate too, from the current level of 12.5% to 8% by the beginning of 2006. Meanwhile, the manufacturing and processing tax rate will be lowered from 11% today down to 8% at the start of 2006.

The importance of competitive business tax rates in attracting investment is confirmed by experience around the world. Indeed, one US study found that a difference of only 1% in tax rates increased business investment by 9% to 11%, with the result, I remind the member from Lincoln Centre—

Mr Smitherman: Niagara Centre.

Mr Wettlaufer: —that it's more jobs.

Moreover, we intend to reduce capital tax rates by 10%, effective January 1, 2004. Capital taxes hurt businesses, especially in the early start-up years when they can least afford it. It's the small businesses that are impacted most by that tax, and we have committed to eliminating it altogether by the time the federal government eliminates its capital tax.

Members of this House may recall that when our government first brought in our tax cut plan, critics said it would kill government revenues. Well, they were wrong. I stand here and tell you that even though our tax rates have gone down, even though the people of Ontario have benefited to the tune of \$16.1 billion, our tax revenues will be \$16.1 billion higher this year than when we started cutting taxes. Tax cuts increase revenue.

I would like to correct the record. I've been saying the member from Lincoln Centre. It's the member from Niagara Centre. We want to get that straight. We want to give him all the credit for being in the House today. He's the only one of his members who is.

Interjection: How many Liberals?

Mr Wettlaufer: Oh, there's one Liberal.

In the coming years, our tax revenues are expected to be \$16.1 billion higher than last year. That's money we can invest in health care, education, seniors and the disabled. Increased revenue allows us to invest in all of our priority programs, the programs that support Ontario's prosperity and quality of life—key parts of our competitive edge.

These days, many of us have family or friends struggling with the challenge of caring for elderly or dependant parents and relatives, so we are acting to recognize the higher costs faced by these family members. Our tax system currently provides tax assistance for people in these situations. However, this year's budget would enhance the support and bring \$50 million in benefits to approximately 165,000 Ontario taxpayers.

As I mentioned earlier, we are also proposing to increase the amount of the disability tax credit, the caregiver tax credit, the infirm dependant tax credit and the disability credit supplement for children with severe disabilities. We are preparing to expand the eligibility for

the caregiver and infirm dependant tax credits to include spouses of common-law partners who are dependent by reason of a mental or physical infirmity, to provide support to more caregivers living apart from dependant relatives and to increase the threshold for the dependant's income above which the caregiver and infirm dependant credits are reduced. This means that more people would qualify for them.

We announced several other tax relief measures in this year's budget. Let's discuss a couple.

To further encourage electricity self-sufficiency, our 2003 budget proposes an additional 100% income tax deduction to Ontario corporations for the cost of qualifying assets used to generate their own electricity from alternative or renewable energy sources. Other energy-related initiatives in this budget include proposed expansion of the five-year retail sales tax rebate for solar energy systems, which we announced last November, to include wind energy systems, micro-hydroelectric systems and geothermal heating-cooling systems for residential premises if purchased after March 27 this year; and proposed doubling of the retail sales tax rebate for qualifying alternative fuel vehicles to \$2,000 for vehicles delivered after March 27 this year. The maximum rebate for propane vehicles remains at \$750.

As I mentioned before, the tax measures outlined in this 2003 budget continue our work to ensure Ontario remains on the path to prosperity. Budgets are about setting priorities and making choices. Our government has made those priorities and choices clear: lower taxes to keep Ontario's economy strong, competitive and growing; create more jobs and higher incomes; increase support for seniors, caregivers and children; health care we can all depend on, where we need it and when we need it; and an accountable education system that provides our young people with the knowledge and skills they need for success.

We also have established a priority that colleges and universities will prepare our students for the opportunities of a lifetime. I was very pleased to work with John Tibbits, the president of Conestoga College, in setting his goals and achieving his goals in that area.

We will continue with our economic plan, and that plan includes cutting taxes. Cutting taxes does stimulate our economy. I remember in 1995 that Mark Mullins was our advising economist, and he said at the time that these tax cuts would work. He was the only economist who said they would work, and he used a very simple economic principle: the law of diminishing returns. All we were doing was reversing the law of diminishing returns. The Liberals swear by Don Drummond at the Toronto-Dominion Bank. He is a naysayer insofar as cutting taxes is concerned. I had thought that by now he would have changed his mind, but he still continues that way.

Ontario continues to be the number one place in North America to do business. Through our government's commitment to tax cuts, debt reduction, strategic investments in health care and education, innovation in infrastructure, modernizing financial regulations, reducing red tape and

eliminating other barriers to growth, we believe there is simply no better place to open up shop, and the many thousands of businesses that have been established here since 1995 think so too.

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Private sector forecasters project the Ontario economy will grow on average by 2.8% in 2003 and 3.5% in 2004. This rate is faster than any of the jurisdictions in any of the G7-G8 over this two-year period. We are the fastest-growing jurisdiction in the G8 and we have been the fastest-growing jurisdiction in the G8 since 1995. We have been the leader. This province—Ontario—has been the leader in reducing taxes and removing barriers to growth and job creation. This has contributed to the province's impressive economic record. Our economic foundation is strong. Our businesses are more competitive than ever before. Inflation is in check, interest rates are low and after-tax incomes are rising. Sound policies will continue to strengthen these fundamentals. Balanced budgets, tax cuts and positive business conditions have created a climate that is stimulating economic growth and raising living standards.

Our economic plan is working. It's a plan to continue the growth and prosperity our government has put in place since 1995. It's a plan to secure a strong and successful future for Ontario. Not only that, but it's a plan that will secure a strong and successful future for Canada, because Ontario is the engine that drives this country's economy.

The Deputy Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Smitherman: It's a pleasure to have two minutes today to speak to what the member from Kitchener just took 18 minutes to say.

I want to make just a few comments. Firstly, he likes to attack people personally. Anyone he doesn't agree with, he attacks personally. Today's version of that is Don Drummond, a senior economist with the Toronto-Dominion Bank, a noteworthy organization. But these members seek to diminish his message. His message is clear, and it's the same message the Dominion Bond Rating Service has about this government's budget.

They like to claim it's in balance, but it's not. There is a \$2-billion hole in the budget of that government. We first said that the day they delivered their speech at Magna. I said it the next day to reporters with Ernie Eves in Orangeville, and yet they've not had the courage to stand up and address it.

Yesterday in scrums here at the Legislature, Ernie Eves was asked, I think by Richard Brennan from the Toronto Star, "Mr Premier, what are you going to sell for \$2 billion, and what are you going to do to deal with the hole in your budget?" Mr Eves had no comment.

The Deputy Speaker: We usually refer to people by their title or their rank.

Mr Smitherman: The Premier.

On the issue of mortgage interest deductibility, we had this huge debate coming forward, and we thought this was going to be some grandiose plan. But as it turns out, what the government of the day is offering by policy

proposal to people with respect to mortgage interest deductibility is that, starting in 2005, they'll give you \$100 a year, or as we like to refer to it, a cup of coffee a week.

The option for Ontarians is extraordinarily clear. You can get \$100 a year from a government to buy a few more coffees, or instead you can choose change. You can choose to invest your support in a government—a Liberal Party government—that will offer this to your children: smaller class sizes from kindergarten to grade 3—a hard cap of 20. That's the alternative—

The Deputy Speaker: Comments or questions?

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): It's amazing that this member can appear to take pride in the fact that there's less and less home care for our folks who, as senior citizens, need help to continue to live in their homes; that more and more medical procedures are being delisted; that more and more pharmaceuticals are being delisted so that, again, mostly seniors have to pay out of pocket. It's amazing that this member can take pride in talking about putting more money in people's pockets, yet the minimum wage remains stagnant for eight years at \$6.85 an hour. How about putting some money in the pockets of the lowest-paid workers in this province—increasing in number, yes, because there have been new jobs, and most of those new jobs have been minimum wage and, at that, part-time and even temporary.

I say to this member that he should take shame in a budget that creates more and more tax breaks for the rich, that immediately reduced Frank Stronach's \$56-million or \$57-million personal income last year by yet another \$3.5 million but didn't give minimum-wage workers a penny—mostly women working darned hard at two or three jobs to support themselves. This government should understand that, during its rule here at Queen's Park, that minimum wage, assuming a cost of living CPI of 2% a year, has been reduced by 16%.

Minimum wage workers are under attack, women are under attack and seniors are under attack, but oh, the wealthy and profitable corporations and all the rich friends—the Frank Stronachs, the \$50-million-plus annual income owners—are the beneficiaries of such largesse. I say shame.

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): It's a pleasure to speak to the member for Kitchener Centre's comments. He came into this Legislature in 1995 as a very well known and successful businessman in Kitchener. He knows what it takes to run a business and actually employ people in Ontario. There have been thousands upon thousands of business owners in Ontario over the last eight years who said in 1995, when this government came to office, "Amen. Finally, someone came to office who understands what businesses face, what it takes to get businesses to invest money and create jobs." We've helped to create a climate that has brought over 1.1 million more net new jobs to this province since 1995. The members opposite complain about these jobs and complain about the minimum wage. The fact of the matter is,

1.1 million people have work today who didn't have work under the former governments opposite.

Some of the members opposite talked about less and less home care. Since 1995, in Niagara alone we've increased home care funding by 130%—a quite simple fact. Pharmaceuticals have been added. There are not less and less pharmaceuticals on the Ontario drug benefit formulary; there are more and more. There are well over 3,300 pharmaceuticals now on the Ontario drug benefit plan.

OHIP coverage: we're expanding coverage of many things under OHIP. For example, the procedure that coincides with Visudyne to help people who are losing their sight has been added to OHIP. So we're adding to OHIP; we're adding pharmaceuticals to the ODB; we're adding home care services over the years.

Most important, this government has had a business climate that is adding jobs, and because more people are working, more people are paying taxes that are giving us more revenues to balance budgets and offer more services.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I've been listening with intent interest to the member for Kitchener. I was very concerned that he didn't deal with the issue of the \$181 million which has been taken out of the budget for public security. My friend Bob Runciman, if I may use a friendly name, as opposed to saying "the Solicitor General," as I used to call him—now he's comparable to Tom Ridge in the United States, the Minister of Public Safety and Security. Last year he lost \$60 million from his budget. This year it's down another \$181 million.

I know that all of us, justifiably, in this province are concerned with matters under his jurisdiction, matters of security, matters of the penal system, the parole system and so on. I'm concerned, when I look at the budget figures and I see his budget is down by \$181 million, that there's got to be a real problem that exists in this province, that the funding does not keep up with the rhetoric.

The other thing I'm concerned about, and the member for Kitchener probably is as well, is that with all the enforcement activities that are going to be required by the Ministry of the Environment, there's not going to be sufficient funding allocated to the Ministry of the Environment to ensure that that enforcement activity can take place, because there is new legislation that this Legislature passed that suggests, I think very strongly, an enforcement component. If we look at legislation down the line governing the spreading of manure and other waste in the province, if we look at waste management, if we look at the water system and the air system, that's going to require restoring the Ministry of the Environment to its previous levels of commitment and staffing. I would like the member to address that issue because I think he'd be concerned about that.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Kitchener Centre has two minutes to reply.

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Mr Wettlaufer: I want to thank the members from Toronto Centre-Rosedale, Niagara Centre, Niagara Falls

and St Catharines for their comments. I would like to address the comment on mortgage interest deductibility.

The member for Toronto Centre-Rosedale feels that people in Ontario don't deserve any mortgage interest deductibility from their taxes. He said that the people of Ontario have a choice. Yes, they do have a choice. They have a choice between lower taxes with our government, which have proven to be without a doubt beneficial to the economy of the province, to the economy of the country, more jobs, and more revenue for the government to put into health care and education; or they can choose a high-tax government like the Liberals' or the NDP's. Both parties are committed to higher taxes if they were to form the government.

The member for Niagara Centre talks about home care. Well, if anybody should know what has happened to home care, that member should. We've increased health care funding in this province from \$17.4 billion in 1995 to just short of \$28 billion in this year's budget. We are providing funding for home care, pharmaceutical care and long-term care. We have a federal government which, while committed initially, when medicare was brought into being in this country, to funding 50% of health care costs, now has contributed only 17% to the province of Ontario and does not provide one cent to Ontario for long-term care, home care or pharmaceutical care.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): There was some discussion about the economic trickle-down effect of tax cuts when they were debating just recently whether the friend of the Conservative accountant was right or whether the TD accountant was right. I just want to quote from a fairly successful person who doesn't have all the degrees after his name, but who I think everybody agrees may be the most learned man alive in North America today when it comes to making money or running the economy. His name is Warren Buffett.

Warren Buffett was commenting yesterday about the other continual round of corporate tax cuts, in the United States under President Bush. I realize that this government of Harris and Eves has followed the philosophy of the Republicans. Here's Warren Buffett, maybe one of the richest men in the world, and he calls this ongoing proposal to cut more corporate taxes in the United States voodoo economics that uses Enron-style accounting. I think it's similar to what's happening here.

Mr Buffett said, "Putting \$1,000 in the pockets of 310,000 families with urgent needs is going to provide far more stimulus to the economy than putting the same \$310 million in my pockets." He's saying, "Don't put money into my pocket, the pocket of the corporate elite. Put the money into the ordinary person's pocket. Because they need the money, they'll spend it."

Instead, this government is continuing with more corporate tax cuts to try and help Frank Stronach, who makes I think \$58 million a year. That's where they had the budget. So if you want to know the true symbol of this budget that this government is defending, it's all

about Mr Frank Stronach and Magna. They had the whole thing staged up there. That's whom they want to please. They don't want to have the budget plan unveiled at Regent Park, or Lawrence Heights in my riding. No, they went to Frank Stronach's palace up there in Brampton. That's what this budget is all about.

Warren Buffett goes on to say, "Government can't deliver a free lunch to the country as a whole. It can, however, determine who pays for lunch." Last week, Warren Buffett said the Senate handed the bill to the wrong party. That's exactly what this budget is all about. It's handing the bill in taxes—as much as you say it's cutting taxes, you'll notice most of the benefits in these budgets in the past have gone to the upper 10%. That's why it's an auto parts budget at Magna, not down on Main Street, where there are people who don't get free lunches. They can't write off their lunches. They actually pay for lunch at the corner diner, believe it or not. But this budget, like all past budgets by this government, has favoured the corporate elite. It will continue to do that at the peril of ordinary working people who still have to pay for lunch.

That's the difference in approach here. So even Warren Buffett calls this voodoo-type economics, Enron-style accounting, and there's no better proof of that than Standard and Poor's, or the Dominion Bond Rating Service. All the experts have looked at this budget proposal, the auto parts budget, and have said that there's a \$2-billion hole in it. That's like saying, "Oh, yeah, the budget in the House is all balanced this year, Jane. It's all balanced. Trust me, Jane, it's balanced. But there's only one problem: I have to sell off the backyard and I have to sell off the front yard so we can keep it in balance." That's what they've done here. They have basically said that they have a balanced budget but there is a \$2-billion debt that we have to pay off.

As everybody keeps asking the Premier, "What are you going to sell, Ernie? What are you going to give away, Ernie?" Do you know what he's going to do, probably, if he ever has the chance? He'll do what he did before: he gave away one of the most significant assets in this province for a song to a Spanish consortium and his friend Al Leach, who got the 407 highway, built by taxpayers' dollars. That's what he did last time. He plans to do the same thing again. What will the Tory government sell off this time? What is the secret plan to sell off? Will it be maybe the LCBO? Will it be Ontario Place? Will it be parks? What will they sell to make up for that \$2-billion hole in this budget that everybody agrees is there and it doesn't add up?

So it's an Enron-type budget prepared and staged up at Frank Stronach's place to please Frank, because Frank needs help. The poor guy makes \$58 million; he says he's worth more. I'm sure the Tories on the other side all agree that Frank Stronach needs more help. They'll have more budgets there, because they voted against the member from Pembroke's resolution to hold the budget here next time. They said, "No, we're going back to Frank Stronach's place." Whoever they're going to pick

next time, you can rest assured it's not going to be on Main Street in small-town Ontario. It's not going to be where there are real people who need help; it's going to be where their big friends with deep pockets are, looking for more corporate handouts.

In all honesty, if you look at this budget, you'll see over and over again an attempt to try and tell people, "We will give you everything you want. Just trust us. Somehow this will all work out. Trust us, you won't get hurt. You'll still have high-level health care and education." We know that after eight years, people in Ontario are too smart. They've seen the reckless damage you've done to our public schools. They've seen the condition of our municipalities, where the infrastructure is crumbling. They've seen our hospitals and what you've done to close hospitals all across this province, what you've done to basically fire 10,000 nurses. That's where you pay for these promises in this budget. That's where the Frank Stronach money will have to come from. It'll have to come from the hospitals, it'll have to come from the nurses they're going to fire, it'll have to come from the textbooks that won't be in schools.

Look at the schools. In eight years, thanks to the guidance of Paul Martin and a robust American economy, we've had a prosperous Ontario. In eight years they still haven't fixed the holes in the roofs on our schools. The plumbing hasn't been fixed. They haven't been able to even paint the school walls.

1700

I've got a hospital in the west end sitting empty after eight years, after they closed it. Another hospital they haven't fixed is in almost Third World condition. For the eight years they've said they were going to do all this stuff, they basically have rewarded their friends, who are very happy. That top 10% love the Frank Stronach-type budgets.

Yesterday I talked to two people, out of many people, as I was going up the street. You should hear what they told me. One said he was sent to hospital for a hernia operation. They sent him home an hour after the hernia operation and he started hemorrhaging. He had to call the ambulance and went back to the hospital again. He said, "Listen, I can't stop the bleeding. Do something." How can you send a person home one hour after a hernia operation? Then he had to go back and forth. He had to spend another week in the hospital. He had to have two or three months of home care that he could hardly get. They push them out of the hospital, and this is a gentleman in his sixties, on to the street an hour after an operation.

I talked to another gentleman who was almost in tears because his son had to wait eight hours in emergency. He couldn't even hold his head up or sit up in emergency. There was nobody to take care of that sick, dying son. That was just last night—two people who have paid the cost of all these gifts they give to their corporate friends. As I said, the underlying factor is that this budget and all these promises were made at the feet of Frank Stronach. Do you think they're trying to please Frank Stronach, or

are they trying to please that guy with the hernia operation in my riding or trying to please the man who lost his son because, in part, he couldn't get good treatment in a hospital?

That's what they're trying to do with these promises. They're giving money that will come from public asset sales. What will the Premier sell next? We know he's got a plan to sell something. He won't tell us because he knows the people of Ontario will say, "Here's another 407." We sold it to the Spanish consortium and Al Leach for \$3 billion. It's now worth \$12 billion. This was Premier Eves's wonderful pre-election fire sale before the last election, but this time, on the eve of the election, he's afraid to publicize what 407 he's going to give away because the people of Ontario have seen the consequences of selling off that 407, where they not only sold it for a song, but people are being gouged 24 hours a day on a highway they paid for and built.

Then the Minister of Transportation stands up and yells and screams at the poor people who are getting gouged by the erroneous billing that consortium is doing. He's going to defend them? He's going to take away their right to have their licence renewed again. Here the government of Ontario is going to act as a collection agency for a consortium that got the deal of a lifetime: \$12 billion worth of public highway for \$3 billion. No wonder they had this budget presentation at the feet of Frank Stronach. That's why they did it there. That's what it represents.

The question is, what will Mr Eves give away, or plan to give away? Ask him that if you see him. "What are you going to give away? Are you going to give away another 407?" That's what his plans are.

This whole budget doesn't deal with the reality of what people are paying in their hydro bills. They're being gouged with every bill. Gas bills: I talked to people last month and their bill went up another hundred bucks. The government sits in silence as insurance rates have gone up 20%. People cannot renew their car and house insurance because this government is allowing the systematic rip-off of people who only want a little bit of insurance when they drive their car. If they have one small accident or if there's any technicality where they want to switch from company to company, they're cut off and told, "Sorry, we don't want you any more."

The government sits there in silence as thousands of Ontarians can't get insurance and are being gouged by the insurance companies. This government does nothing. There's nothing in this Stronach-Magna budget that says they're going to protect people who are being gouged by the insurance companies—nothing, not a word, not one single word. I remember this was the same government that had door-to-door hustlers conning people with gas marketers and brokers. They were selling them and making them sign three or four contracts under false pretences, taking advantage of poor people all across this province. They stood by silently while seniors and working people were gouged by the privatization of natural gas for heating.

Hydro: in this budget, the government is doing nothing about a multi-billion dollar debt they're putting on the back of every taxpayer who is on Hydro. They messed up the Hydro file to the point where they don't know whether, tomorrow, Pickering is on or off, if Bruce is on or off. They don't know whether the bills are going to be double, triple or quadruple, if you add the debt that is being borne by the people of Ontario because of their mismanagement of the Hydro file.

It's been a laughing stock. Even *The Economist*, the most respected international magazine about the economy, made fun of this government and Premier Eves about how they mishandled the Hydro file. They said what he was doing on Hydro was laughable. Our Hydro is probably the most significant asset we have, next to our health and our education systems. They completely fouled it up to the point where Ontario, which was the proud home of a public utility known as Ontario Hydro, is amassing over a billion dollars a year in debt because of their mismanagement. They don't know what they're doing with it from day to day—very little about gas, Hydro and insurance bills, and how they're going to help people cope.

They promise they're going to give you a break on mortgage interest rates. The seniors are going to get a break. They're going to give corporations a break. Everybody's going to get a break, but everybody says, "Who's going to pay for these promises?" You've got Hydro debt; you've got a \$2-billion hole in the budget; you've got hospitals that need money—as we speak there's even a hiring freeze on nurses. There was a report today that said there's a \$1.4-billion gap in the amount of money this government was supposed to ante up for education.

So you've got all these huge multi-billion dollar gaps, yet this government wants everybody to believe—in their desperation, because they're desperate to try and cling to power for the sake of power, they're promising whatever they can in their deathbed repentance. "We'll give you this; we'll give away the store; we'll give you a highway; we'll give you whatever you want. Please elect us. We're desperate." It's a futile attempt to pull the wool over the eyes of the people of Ontario who for eight years have seen what their financial mismanagement has done, in the best of times when they could have been fixing our schools and hospitals.

The most laughable part of this whole budget is that they've got this cockamamie scheme in there for municipalities. They're telling municipalities, "You need a referendum if you want to have money for your bridges, roads or transit. We'll set the wording of the referendum and then you've got to have half the population turn out to make the referendum possible." In other words, 50% of the people have to come out to vote for the referendum to be legal.

1710

This referendum, as you know, is totally hypothetical, because very few of the members across there have sat on municipal councils to know that the average turnout in

municipal elections is about 35%. So not only will they not meet the legal requirement, but to try to get people to vote on whether they want to increase taxes—guess what will happen? People will say no. So it's a way of basically downloading on to the municipalities, as they have done for eight years. They've downloaded welfare, they've downloaded transit, they've downloaded public health, all on municipalities. This budget continues the downloading.

They say they will cut your taxes here, meanwhile you'll pay more user fees for your soccer fields and your gym, more for hydro bills, more for car and house insurance—for damn sure, you'll pay more. I'll withdraw the "damn." So don't trust them.

As people are saying all across this province, "Not his time, Ernie." Eight years of voodoo economics, eight years of Enron-style accounting is not going to fool the people of Ontario, not this time, Ernie, because they know this budget is all about pleasing the likes of Frank Stronach, who this government has a lot of empathy for. They feel Frank needs more than \$58 million a year. They're going to do their best to make sure he gets his break. Guaranteed this budget is to Frank Stronach's liking, but I'll tell you, it's not to Mr and Mrs Jones's liking or Mr and Mrs Carlucci's liking, that's for darn sure.

The Deputy Speaker: Comments and questions.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I have listened with interest to the comments from the member for Eglinton-Lawrence. He pointed out many of the problems of real Ontarians across this province—average people, low-income people—and the kinds of things they're crying out for, and nothing they need is mentioned in this infomercial.

They at least decided to give their so-called budget, their infomercial, among real cars that you can get in and drive and tell where to go and go somewhere in a straight line, but they decided to deliver their platform with go-karts, with a couple of MPPs sitting in little go-karts and flying out in the go-karts.

Hon Mr Hudak: It's cool.

Ms Churley: Yes, you were in that, weren't you? It actually looked pretty silly to me.

I wasn't allowed in. I went out there but they made me stand in the rain. I didn't fight that. I do go to government announcements no matter where they are made because that's my right, but I understood. I stood in the rain and waited until after. They announced that in little go-karts that bump around all over the place; it doesn't know what it's doing, bumping into objects, but it goes around in a circle. That's where you announced your platform. That's why I said your platform leads us straight back full circle to Walkerton.

But what's interesting about this budget we're talking about today is that your budget wasn't balanced last year and it's not balanced this year.

Interjection.

Ms Churley: No, it hasn't been. It's just amazing; if you had been here listening when your colleagues were

sitting over here as the third party, when we were in the worst recession since the 1930s, talking about our deficits when we got downgraded, they were God then, but now, when you have a respected credit rating firm that has issued a formal report that Ontario will have a deficit of \$2 billion, you won't admit to it. Suddenly you've changed your tune on those people, haven't you?

Mr Wettlaufer: I am just flabbergasted at the rhetoric emanating from the member for Eglinton-Lawrence. He attacks Frank Stronach. I don't know how you can attack a fellow Liberal.

Interjection.

Mr Wettlaufer: No, no. Sit down. He ran for the federal Liberals in 1988.

Mr Colle: Mr Speaker, on a point of order: it was not a personal attack. It was used in explaining a corporate sector representative.

The Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order. The Chair recognizes the member for Kitchener Centre.

Mr Wettlaufer: That's OK, Speaker. I was just getting to the meat of it anyway. They attack a successful businessman, but earlier today the member from Windsor West stood in her place and wanted the government to come up with a billion dollars for a business that is not successful in her riding, for DaimlerChrysler, a multinational corporation. I tell you, I find this very hard to take.

Interjection.

Mr Wettlaufer: She wanted a billion dollars to build a plant in Windsor. That's what she wanted.

He also talked about Highway 407. Let's talk about Highway 407. A corporation is spending hundreds of millions of dollars on expanding, repairing and completing that highway. In fact, by the time it's completed east of Markham, it will be into the billions of dollars. That's money our government felt we would rather spend on health care, education and the elderly. That is why that was sold.

Interjection.

Mr Wettlaufer: Profit? What kind of profit? You would not want the return on the money they have invested.

Mr Smitherman: We're going to rename the minister—minister, that's pretty funny—the member for Kitchener Centre "the apologist for the 407." That ought to get him a few votes.

I want to say firstly, no one attacked Frank Stronach; they attacked the government opposite that would offer to one of the richest people in our province a further \$3.1 million.

Interjections.

Mr Smitherman: They don't like to hear it. They're going to give him a further \$3.1 million, because his pay packet is not big enough.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr Wettlaufer: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would just like to point out that the member from Toronto Centre-Rosedale wasn't even here to hear whether or not he attacked Frank Stronach.

The Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order. The Chair recognizes the member for Toronto Centre-Rosedale.

Mr Smitherman: The tactics on that side to interrupt the cadence of my remarks: an unbelievable, dirty trick.

I want to make a further comment about DaimlerChrysler. He referred to DaimlerChrysler as an unsuccessful venture in the riding of the member from Windsor. That's a disgusting thing to hear from someone who just a little while ago spent time telling us about the guys at Budd Automotive. No connection there with the auto assembly industry, I suppose.

The other thing that has happened in this Legislature this afternoon is that the Ernie Eves government—not in the chamber, but in the building—finally acknowledged what we've been claiming for some time: that in 2002, when they stood in this place and delayed tax cuts and broke their own law in so doing, that was in effect a tax increase. At least, that's what they're trying to claim about us.

The Liberal Party plan is clear: we're going to ditch some corporate tax cuts; we're going to ditch the private school tax voucher. Here's what we're going to do: we're going to make the biggest contribution that we can to restoring confidence in the essential public services, just like the member from Eglinton-Lawrence spoke about with such extraordinary passion. The members opposite could learn quite a bit from his presentation.

Mr Kormos: Yes, DaimlerChrysler is in trouble, and so are, more importantly, the workers who work at DaimlerChrysler, just like Navistar in Chatham. I say in the context of this budget that yes, this province should be sitting at the table with Navistar, helping to save the community of Chatham and the workers at Navistar. Yes, this government should be at the table with DaimlerChrysler, helping to save that DaimlerChrysler operation down there in Windsor. But please, so should the federal government.

Here we've got a federal government that's going to spend—maybe it will, maybe it won't. Dennis Mills—what riding is he from?

Ms Churley: Toronto-Danforth.

Mr Kormos: Toronto-Danforth. He wants to spend \$10 million of federal funds for a Rolling Stones concert. I told him Walter Ostanek would come up to Toronto. He has won as many Grammys as the Rolling Stones have. Walter Ostanek would come up to Toronto for 500 bucks and an overnight stay in a hotel room. Quite frankly, he'll draw millions too.

What's interesting is the omissions from this budget, any commitment just to saving the auto sector in this province, and it is desperately in need of salvation. I say to my counterparts in the Liberal caucus, the federal Liberals, the federal government, have shown a similar reluctance to be at that table in terms of saving auto sector jobs.

1720

What's missing? Not a penny of relief for college and university students whose tuitions have increased by over 150% since 1996—tuition fees of 20 grand-plus a year.

This government is creating an environment where only the children of the wealthiest, once again, are going to have access to colleges and universities.

Ms Churley: Frank Stronach's grandchildren.

Mr Kormos: Yes, Frank Stronach's grandkids will get to go to college and university, because when you make that kind of cheese and when you've got those kinds of tax breaks from this government, you don't got nothing to worry about. Working women and men, their kids will never see the daylight of a university campus or a college campus.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Eglinton-Lawrence has two minutes to reply.

Mr Colle: I appreciate the comments from both sides. I think it's very valuable to get input from both sides because it's a fundamental debate we're in here. The debate is the direction this province is going in, and as you can see with the budget proposal from the auto parts plant, this government has made a firm decision to go back to the past, to the extreme divisionary approach to budgetary expenditures, where they're going to cater to the elite in the province and let our public services, our public schools, our public health care and ordinary people just make do, while people who don't need help are going to get their help. That's quite clear from this budget and I think the government is proud of that, sadly.

I would say that the critical thing here for the people of Ontario is to remember that if you look back at the eight years of what this government has done, are our hospitals any better? Is emergency room service any better? Do we have more doctors? Do we have more nurses? Look at our schools: has our education system been improved? There has never been so much strife in our schools: lack of textbooks, overcrowded classrooms, closing of schools. Then on top of that, you look at our cities. Are our cities any better after eight years of Harris-Eves? They are basically crumbling. Our sewers, our roads, our services have been cut, whether it's garbage pickup or basic transit. This government, after eight years, has proven to the people of Ontario that they're not about pleasing Main Street, they're about pleasing Frank Stronach.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr AL McDonald (Nipissing): I'm honoured and pleased to stand in my place here this afternoon and debate the budget. I can say, this being Thursday afternoon, getting close to 6 o'clock, it's the last day the Legislature sits before we can all go home, work in our offices in our hometowns, meet with our constituents, get out to events and say hello to people—because we've been gone for four days—and I'm looking forward to it.

I also find it very interesting that it's a very spirited debate given the fact that we've been here for this whole week. It's very encouraging that people have a lot of interest in the budget.

I know from a northern Ontario point of view, I like what I see in the budget. I can tell you, in my riding of Nipissing, we're building a new hospital in North Bay. We're building a new hospital in Mattawa. We've helped

the town of Powassan with some water infrastructure. We've helped the town of Callandar with water infrastructure. We've seen a lot of investment in my riding of Nipissing but, more particularly, in northern Ontario.

I'm very pleased to say that the four-laning of Highway 11 between Trout Creek and South River will be open this fall. For anybody who travels in the riding of Nipissing, from Mattawa or Powassan or Trout Creek or North Bay or Jocko Point down to Toronto, they know that, one, it's a little bit quicker, but it's definitely safer for us. Highway infrastructure is very important to access the southern markets, and I'm very pleased that's going ahead. I'm very pleased also that the Premier made an announcement that the four-laning of Highway 69 is going to go ahead as well. As true northerners, we believe we have to work together to make our lot in life that much better. We've seen a lot of growth in southern Ontario, and we want to see that come to northern Ontario, and part of that is the infrastructure to bring the markets and the jobs to the north.

We have the first medical school in the history of the province of Ontario in the last 30 years going into northern Ontario, with satellite offices in Thunder Bay and Sudbury, which is good news.

The Premier also announced tax incentive zones for all of northern Ontario, not just specific areas. I can tell you, as northerners, we welcome that and we applaud the Premier for his leadership. As I said, we have to think regionally to be successful in the north and we have to act together, co-operatively, to make things happen, to create jobs in northern Ontario and to create opportunities for our young people to stay, find employment, start families and build our communities in northern Ontario.

I was also pleased to see the tax relief for senior citizens being offered because, as you know, senior citizens have built our communities and our cities in the north. From being out and talking to a lot of them—as municipal taxes and all the services and water charges were going up, they were afraid that they might have to leave their homes. They welcome this tax relief. They see this as a way they can save about \$500 a year. I've heard a few members opposite say, "What's \$500?" I can tell you that in northern Ontario, to seniors, to people with low incomes, \$500 is a lot per year; and if it enables them to stay in their homes for the next 10 years because they're saving \$500 a year, I welcome that and I understand that they do as well.

I watched the leader of the official opposition, Mr McGuinty, stand up, and very seldom does he ever speak about northern Ontario. But he did visit North Bay, Sudbury and the Soo. He actually visited. I mean that he flew in, didn't even get out of the airport terminal and just went to the next site. So I guess his 15-minute stop in each of the three places before he flew back to Toronto was his commitment to northern Ontario, because let's face it, all he is interested in is southern Ontario.

I called up his Web site because I was interested to see what he had to say about northern Ontario. This is right off his Web site. There is a picture of a fisherman sitting

in a boat; and he's saying that he's going to increase the natural resources and create opportunities for fishing, hunting and tourism in northern Ontario. I find it very interesting that there's a fisherman sitting in a boat. He is not even wearing a life jacket and he has four lines in the water. I don't know if Mr McGuinty knows this, but that's illegal. You can't have more than one line in the water.

I just might say to anybody who's watching, especially those people in northern Ontario, go right on to his Web site and look up what he says about northern Ontario. Not only does he have four lines in the water, he's not even wearing a life jacket.

So what is he promoting in northern Ontario? Is he promoting us to break the law and not to wear life jackets? I don't know who did his Web site, but obviously he okayed it. Maybe he should pay a little bit more attention to northern Ontario because he doesn't realize that this is illegal. Not only, on top of that—he's promoting northern Ontario—he has a big cloud of industrial gas, smoke or smog right behind him. Is smog what he's promoting for northern Ontario?

I can tell you that in northern Ontario, we want jobs, but we want them to be environmentally friendly. We don't need this kind of stuff. I find it incredible that he's promoting illegal activities. That might be a bit strong, but they okayed a fisherman not wearing a life jacket with four fishing lines in the water. What does that have to say about a leader? I can tell you: not that much.

Just in the past couple of days, I was negotiating with the Minister of Natural Resources on a fishing study, an assessment of Lake Nipissing. I'm very pleased he agreed that this was very important to my riding of Nipissing. He realizes—and everybody who lives in northern Ontario, in Nipissing, North Bay, Mattawa or Callander understands—how valuable Lake Nipissing is to our area. It's a \$1-billion asset. It has economic returns of probably about \$80 million a year, so it's very important to us. I must say that people in northern Ontario know you can only put one line in the water.

1730

Also in the budget I saw an area that I thought was very important. I spoke about the new hospital in North Bay, and I spoke about the new hospital in Mattawa. I didn't touch on the new children's treatment centre that Minister of Health Tony Clement announced back in November, which is just incredible for children and parents in our region, in northern Ontario. That was very important. I really appreciate all the support the Minister of Health has given us in northern Ontario. We're looking forward to the implementation of the children's treatment centre.

As we see a province-wide, a countrywide, a North America-wide shortage of nurses and doctors, it's not just a problem in the north; it's a problem throughout the free world. I must applaud the Premier and the Minister of Health for free tuition for doctors and nurses who are going to practise in underserved areas. I can tell you that's pretty much all of the north. Parents have said to

me that obviously one of their major concerns is health care. The fact is that we're not only going to be able to train these doctors and nurses in northern Ontario—studies have shown that if we train them in the north, they'll probably stay in the north. That probably is going to work out to be very true, but we're giving young people incentive to go about these professions that are going to be much needed in the future and not burden them with a debt that they have to incur for these studies.

We've been getting a lot of calls at the constituency office regarding this program for free tuition for nurses. When we talk about retaining our young people in the north, wouldn't that be great? What a great opportunity for our young people to get into the medical field, to train to become nurses and doctors and to give back to their communities. For every person a doctor or nurse helps, saves or makes their life that much better—I can't think of a better way of giving back to your community.

I applaud this initiative. I just want to thank all the medical professionals and caregivers who have made our lives that much easier, and our grandparents', our parents', our children's, that much better a quality of life because they believe in helping individuals. I think this was a great step forward.

I want to touch a little bit on small business in northern Ontario. I know, as a small business owner, which I was over the past 15 or 20 years, I've watched various levels of government come into place. As a small entrepreneur I didn't really understand how these taxes happened, but I can tell you as a small business owner that every time I turned around, it seemed like the government was telling me they wanted more money for this and more money for that, I had to do this and I had to do that. There were forms to fill out and fees to pay. I talked to a lot of my fellow business owners around North Bay, Mattawa and Callander and I can tell you, they were wondering why they were even in business, because government just seemed to be in the way. They were blocking all their growth, making it very difficult for us. At one point we all felt that three days out of five all we were doing was filling out government forms.

Then, of course, I remember they implemented the EHT, the employer health tax—which is exactly that: it's just another tax on business. What it did was tax the businesses that were creating jobs, so the more people you hired, the more tax you had to pay to hire those people. It was the exact opposite of what small business is trying to do. It's trying to prosper. It needs to make a profit so that it can keep continuing on. It needs to pay its individuals. Back in 1995-96, when the provincial Conservatives came into power, they exempted the first \$400,000 in wages to your employees—they exempted that. When you're paying a 2% tax on that first \$400,000—that's a small business; that might be 10 or 12 employees. You can imagine all these small businesses paying \$8,000 just for that one little payroll tax. It was something they instituted. When I heard Mr McGuinty stand up and say he's going to roll that all back, he's going to throw it out, he's going to put the taxes back in

on all these corporations, I can tell you that what he's saying to the small business owners is, "Do you know what? We don't care. It's only another \$8,000 per year for you. So what? You should pay it." I can tell you that if that's their job-creation plan, they've got it all backwards. That's not going to work. All that's going to do is lay off people.

Interjection.

Mr McDonald: I can hear them yelling across. That's their stand, and I know they don't want the people of Ontario to know exactly what that means. They just keep saying they're going to roll back all these tax savings to the big, bad corporations.

I just want to say to the people of Ontario, if you work at a store or a mall or an office or an accountant's office, if you work anywhere in the private sector, what they're saying is that they're going to throw all those tax cuts out the window and that's going to make it more difficult for your employer to keep you employed. So be very careful. I can tell you, as a small business owner, that what they're proposing will kill jobs, will hurt small business, will hurt the small business owners and will be detrimental to Ontario, and they don't want that message out. They just keep saying, "the big, bad corporations." Well, I can tell you that the big, bad corporation is the everyday, hard-working entrepreneur who creates jobs, creates prosperity for Ontario, puts more money back into the treasury to give us money to fund health care, to fund education.

If we go back to that, if we go back to what they are trying to do, back to the late 1980s when they just kept taxing and taxing, I can tell you that is the wrong direction. Small business owners will be the first ones who will stand up when they realize that's what they're trying to do, and there will be an outcry. I want to say to all those individuals out there who just go to work from 9 to 5, Monday to Friday, and don't fully understand that what they're doing is putting their jobs at risk—I want to say to the average Ontarian that it's very important that they keep that in mind when they go to the polls some time in the next year. What they want to do is increase taxes right across the board. That will hurt everyone, and it will reduce services, because I can tell you there won't be as many people employed paying taxes.

When I'm in downtown North Bay and walk down the main street, I see John Wilson, who is the DIA chair, out there working very hard. He's out there trying to make a better environment for the downtown businesses. Of course the downtown businesses are competing against the malls and against Internet sales, and he's trying to create an environment for them to succeed. I can tell you that they are turning the corner, but it's a tough go. Business is tough. In northern Ontario it's a little different than southern Ontario. You come here to Toronto and see help wanted signs all over the place. I can tell you that in northern Ontario it's not like that. We need to create the environment so that these businesses can succeed and pay their municipal, provincial and federal taxes, so that we can continue to get the services we enjoy.

I just want to say to those small business owners in downtown North Bay, "Keep going. You're going in the right direction." Our provincial government has invested over a million dollars just in the CP renovation project, and the federal government is a partner as well, which we welcome. You're starting to see this new energy downtown, with the waterfront. When I look out to Mattawa, I see the mayor, Dean Backer, is working very hard. His town has gone through some tough times as well with the softwood lumber dispute, but I can tell you, they are not lying down. They're fighting for everything they can get for their area.

We all share the responsibility in northern Ontario that we look after one another. We don't think of ourselves as just one community; we think of ourselves as a region, as a place to do business, as a place to raise our families and enjoy the natural resources that we have, because we do have a good quality of life. But the challenge obviously is to keep our youth in the north, to create growth and assessment that will make our communities that much stronger.

1740

I also saw, getting back to health care, a portion in the budget about the Electronic Child Health Network. That's crucial to northern Ontario, because if a parent has a sick child, the parent can bring the child into the hospital in northern Ontario and they can do the X-rays. They'll have a specialist right at Sick Kids looking at the X-ray at the same time, so that they can determine the best course of action for that child. You can imagine if you had a sick child and that wasn't in place. You have to put your child in the car, drive down to Toronto—and we all know how much it costs to stay here—take time off work, the anxiety that you would have with a four-hour drive down and waiting to see a specialist. Now they can just drive to the local hospital, take the X-rays and have a specialist review them and give the course of action. So you can imagine how much money that's going to save the health care field, our budget and our tax dollars.

I am very thrilled with the announcement that is forthcoming, because it shows that it doesn't matter where you live in the province of Ontario. It could be northern, southern, eastern or western Ontario. If we can provide the resources, specialists, doctors, nurses and expertise, it doesn't matter where you live in the province. That shows that the province is listening. That shows that the government of Ontario is listening to the people and providing the infrastructure required and needed, so that families with parents and grandchildren who might need care have it.

You know, when I sit here day in and day out and I listen to the opposition scream across at this and that—and that's their job, and I respect that—what I find is they ignore all the great things that are happening. You never hear them say, "You know what? That's a good idea. I support that. I can tell you that I really like the hospital in North Bay." They never say that. They don't say it whatsoever. They just concentrate on a few little

things that they want to change, where they think they can get some traction.

I want to say that I'm very proud of all these initiatives and very proud of the Premier for paying attention to northern Ontario for making good things happen there. That's just the beginning of great things that are going to happen if the people of northern Ontario believe in themselves and believe in this government.

Mr Agostino: I certainly listened with interest to the member across the floor. I guess what he failed to talk about is the record of Ernie Eves and his ability to keep his word and his commitments. The reality is, they can put whatever they want in their budget.

Who can trust Ernie Eves and the Tories to keep their word? I mean, Ernie Eves broke his own Taxpayer Protection Act by delaying tax cuts in the 2002 budget. In 1999, Ernie Eves promised to cut residential property tax by 20%—another broken promise. When he was running for the leadership, he called the \$500-million handout to private schools "ludicrous." It was his word, not ours. He said it was ludicrous. What has Ernie Eves done now? He's gone ahead with that tax break for private schools.

When he sold the 407 in 1999, Ernie Eves said he would cap the tolls at 2% plus inflation. They've gone up as high as 203%. In 1999, he said they were committed to publicly funded health care. But today we have private MRIs, CT clinics and construction of private hospitals—a two-tier health care system that Ernie Eves privately wanted. But again, he said that's not what he wanted.

When Ernie Eves came back and forced one of his members to step aside, he said, "There's no patronage appointment here. There's no payback for this. He's just doing this out of the goodness of his heart." Guess what? The member, Mr Tilson, got an \$111,000 appointment the other day.

Again, how can you believe anything Ernie Eves has to say? This man and this party and this government will say and do whatever it takes to get re-elected. They have no values. They have no principles. They stand for absolutely nothing.

If you don't like Ernie Eves's position, just wait two days, or two weeks, and it will change. He'll make you happy. Ernie Eves does not know what he believes in. He has absolutely no idea why he wants to be Premier of Ontario. He has no values when it comes to governing this province. Sooner or later, Ernie Eves will have to face the electorate—not the 18,000 Tory members who elected him but the people of Ontario. The day of reckoning will come.

Mr Kormos: When this Conservative government persists in talking about small business, it becomes clearer and clearer that they think small business is some non-union shop with 100 employees. That's simply not the case; that's not the reality. I know small business. My grandparents were small business people; my parents were small business people. I grew up working in that shop from when I was 12 years old. Small businesses are the folks like my friends down at Denistoun Variety, at the corner of Denistoun and West Main. Relieving them

of the annual corporate filing fee means diddly because they aren't incorporated. It's a mom-and-pop operation. Relieving them of corporate taxes by reducing the corporate tax rate means nothing to Sang and Monica who run Denistoun Variety and work 16 and 18 hours a day doing it.

What would help small business people like Denistoun Variety would be an increase in minimum wage so that minimum wage workers in that area would have a little more to spend in that corner store on a daily basis. What would help them would be a reduction of the downloading on to municipalities so they could get a break on the property taxes. What would help them would be this government keeping their promise to cut taxes across the board when it comes to property taxes.

This government thinks small business is 100 non-union employees in a corporate-owned shop. Sorry, small businesses across this province are mom-and-pop family operations. They're not incorporated. They're hard-working people. They're people who work seven days a week, 16 and 18 hours a day. They're people who want to see progressive government. They're people who want to see fairness from government. They're people who want to see their kids afford to go to university and college so their kids don't have to work 16 and 18 hours a day in a corner store like Denistoun Variety. This government doesn't come close to meeting their needs or serving their interests.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): I want to say, first and foremost, that was an excellent speech. I think you did a good job. Since you've arrived in this place you've done nothing but impress me with your command of the issues and your ability to express them. I think the people of Nipissing, North Bay, should be proud and honoured that you are their member, and proud and honoured that you're seeking re-election too.

I don't want to spend a lot of time debating what Mr Kormos says because virtually every small business owner I know, whether it be two or three employees or 100 employees, agrees on one thing: they will never vote NDP. Having him suggest he's defending small business, well, he's defending people who don't want to be defended by him. Be my guest. Go ahead and defend people who don't want to be defended by you. I've been in politics 22 years, and I find the most adamant anti-NDPers out there are small business people en masse.

With respect to the Liberal's comment, this is funny coming from an opposition party that has a leader who in 1992 introduced Bill 14 banning school strikes. Talk about flip-flopping, a potential different point of view today as opposed to 1992, but in a weaselly, mealy-mouthed, Liberal fashion. Do you want to know what his bill said? This is what's so beautiful about being a Liberal: "I will only ban school strikes after October 31." What the hell is that? You can go on strike for no more than 20 days in September, and you can go on strike for 20 days in October, but you can't go on strike in November, December, January, February, March, April, May or

June. What kind of muddle-headed, mealy-mouthed, Liberal, thought-provoking, cotton-minded person drafted that? Dalton McGuinty. Now they've got a chance to order some teachers back to work on May 22 or whatever, and he's opposed. It's after Halloween. Why isn't he in favour?

Mr Joseph Cordiano (York South-Weston): I want to say to the Minister of the Environment that the leadership race was over a year ago, so it's not going to pay any dividends—oh, I forgot. He's planning for the next time around, so it's OK. You can pat the backbenchers on the back. That's good PR, I say to the Minister of the Environment. You're thinking longer-term.

Let me just say this to the government members: when Mike Harris was Premier, the leader of your party, Premier—

Interjection.

Mr Cordiano: At the very least, what I have to say is this: it was difficult, at the end of the day, to argue with the guy who lived up to what he said he was going to do. You know what? I say to you that I didn't agree with just about everything he did, but you couldn't argue with the fact that he said, "I stand here and this is where I stand." With this leader and this Premier, Ernie Eves, you don't know where he stands. You guys will wake up tomorrow morning and find that all of a sudden he's reversed his policies 180 degrees. Give me a break. Have you ever seen such reversals? The list is endless.

I want to go back to another thing that was talked about earlier: small business. One of the things I was very proud of that we introduced when we were in government, that I had a hand in introducing, was the creation of the new ventures program, which helped and assisted small business with access to capital, new business start-ups. Guess what? The Conservatives did away with that program. I would say the New Democrats did not completely abolish that program. They worked with the banks.

Interjection.

Mr Cordiano: But you guys did away with that program. It was helping small business. I'll tell you, most small businesses still have a problem with access to capital. If you want to help small business, help them with that, because access to capital is still an issue. I would say to you, with respect to all these tax cuts, it's not helping the small business guys out there.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Nipissing has two minutes to reply.

Mr McDonald: I'd like to thank the members from Hamilton East, Niagara Centre, Etobicoke Centre and York South-Weston for their comments.

I just want to recap. We were speaking about promises and issues, and I want to say to the people of Nipissing first that I've heard Mr McGuinty stand up and say he's going to help health care in the north. It was their government that cancelled our hospital in North Bay. It was the Liberal government that cancelled our hospital. We'd fundraised for the hospital and they cancelled it.

Dalton McGuinty made one of his stops in North Bay. He flew in to the North Bay airport and spent 15 minutes there. Do you know what he said? He said, "You know what? We'll complete what's going on with Highway 11 north, but that's all. We're committing to Highway 69." The people in Nipissing listened very closely. He did not commit to Highway 11; he committed to Highway 69. All he was interested in was that his member from Sudbury got his project. I just want to be very clear that this leader has stated that he's concentrating on Highway 69, not on Highway 11.

He also showed up at that airport and said, "We're going to allow northerners to stud their tires." Who's going to pay to fix the roads after everybody wrecks

them with studded tires? Then he goes to Sault Ste Marie and says, "No, we're not going to do that." In North Bay he says this and in Sault Ste Marie he says that. Do you know what? He doesn't even know that Sault Ste Marie is still in northern Ontario and that we get that news as well.

Here's a leader who's saying it's OK to have four fishing lines in the water. To northerners, that's an insult. Maybe I should say to the members opposite, you might want to tell your leader to adjust the picture a little bit.

The Deputy Speaker: It being almost 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 pm on Monday, May 26, 2003.

The House adjourned at 1753.

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Fourth Session, 37th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Quatrième session, 37^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Monday 26 May 2003

Lundi 26 mai 2003

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 26 May 2003

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 26 mai 2003

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

SUDBURY REGIONAL HOSPITAL

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): Today I plead with the Harris-Eves government to please fund our stalled hospital construction project. It has been too long now since the government abdicated its responsibilities to fund this project.

What is more devastating to our community is that this project is now starting to hurt the economy of Sudbury. The government's inaction is hurting our doctor recruitment program. The government's inaction is undermining our hope about a northern Ontario medical school starting on time. And it's not me saying this; it's people in Sudbury. It's the Greater Sudbury Development Corp who is saying that it's hurting the economy. Doctor retention and recruitment is paramount in importance to our community, and it continues to be hurt by this government's inaction.

Today, on behalf of all the people in Sudbury who have signed the "Ernie Pay Up" postcard campaign—these are the postcards I received on Friday from my office. Literally thousands of people have signed the postcards, sent letters, signed petitions. They want this government to begin living up to its responsibilities and fund the Sudbury Regional Hospital construction project.

KITCHENER RANGERS

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre): The Kitchener Rangers are the Memorial Cup champions. The Kitchener Rangers are an integral part of our community, and it gives me great pleasure to stand here in the Ontario Legislature to recognize this team for their triumphant effort and achievements this season. It is a great pleasure for us all to witness these young leaders in their sport and community, working diligently to achieve success. The amount of heart and determination they showed is profound.

These young men work tirelessly to accomplish their goals, to ultimately be drafted by the National Hockey League. Yet while they strive for excellence, they do an incredible service for their community. When these young men reach their goals, they will continue to

support the people and the city that believed in them and helped them fulfill their dreams.

Because the Kitchener Rangers were so successful in the OHL season and playoffs, an incredible energy can be felt throughout all of Kitchener. It instills pride within our city, accompanied by a fellowship among hockey fans. Yet this does not exclude the rest of Kitchener's residents, because when an important part of our city is successful, the entire community benefits. The Kitchener Rangers going all the way is not only great for the team and for our city; it also shows the rest of the hockey world that Kitchener produces champions and leaders.

The Kitchener Rangers set a fine example of what my community strives to be, and I am proud to recognize them here today: captain and Memorial Cup MVP Derek Roy; Eminger, Richards, Halkidis, Benoit, Campbell, Dickie, Eason, Kanko, O'Nabigon, DiRienzo, Smith, Grennier, Keefe, Boucher, Clarkson, McGrath and Martynowski; general manager and coach Peter De Boer; assistant coach Steve Spott; and announcers Don Cameron and Gary Doyle.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Just while we're on sports themes, as the member will know, I won a Memorial Cup—that's what this ring is—and was most valuable goaltender in the Memorial Cup.

Interjection.

The Speaker: The member for Sudbury should know. We beat Sudbury in an eight-game series, though.

Just very quickly, I did want to introduce a couple of people in the Speaker's gallery along that theme. With us today is Mr Bob Tindall, who was the scout for the Boston Bruins and who decided to draft me. Bob, surprisingly enough, kept his job with the Bruins for many years even after drafting me. He's joined by Mr Greg Harrison, who does the masks for all the goaltenders. Without him, I would have no teeth today.

Please welcome our honoured guests.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: We all congratulate the Kitchener Rangers, and we know that when you were playing hockey back in the 1960s, it was tougher then too.

The Speaker: We also know I wasn't that good; that's why I'm here. But enough of the fun.

RENDERING INDUSTRY

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): I rise today to once again bring attention to the very serious crisis in the dead-stock removal and rendering industry. My colleague from Chatham-Kent Essex brought this to the minister's attention last week, yet the chaos continues and worsens. Twelve thousand metric tonnes of dead animal stock, remnants from slaughter and restaurant grease per week are produced in this province, and 40% to 60% of that is exported to the U.S., yet the border is closed.

A local producer from my riding called Oxford Dead Stock to have a dead sow removed. This is the message that was on the answering machine: "Due to the outbreak of BSE, we have lost our dead animal byproducts market. The plant is closed and there will be no service pickups. We are asking the producers to call the Ontario Ministry of Agricultural and Food, your MP and your commodity groups, because they did not listen to us. The more voices that are heard, the better. Hopefully they can resolve this and we can get back to service as soon as possible."

This has the potential to become a public health crisis. These animals must be picked up. Thousands of carcasses cannot be left on our farms to rot. If they are not picked up, you have to do something with them. Methods of illegal disposal have serious implications to our environment and our water. The agriculture minister must show leadership now and deal with this in a very public manner, including a viable option and action plan for our livestock producers. I call on the minister to let everyone in the industry know what exactly you are going to do about this and when you are going to do something about this.

PHARMACISTS

Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington): Ontario pharmacists are highly educated health professionals. They are the drug experts. However, pharmacists are not recognized and utilized to their fullest capabilities.

The Ontario drug benefits program is the fastest-growing expense in the health care budget, increasing an alarming 11% last year. Pharmacists have the unique ability to help manage rising drug costs by making sure patients are on appropriate drugs and using them accurately. After all, the number one reason for seniors to be admitted to hospital in this province is because of an adverse reaction to a doctor-prescribed drug.

Health experts like Romanow and Kirby have recognized the need to invest in pharmacists as a tool to improve health care. Other provinces recognize that pharmacists provide cognitive services, but unfortunately Ontario pharmacists are still waiting. Our government has excluded the Ontario Pharmacists' Association from its review of drug utilization. For the past several years, drug manufacturers have been raising their prices beyond what is legislatively permitted. Therefore, pharmacists

have seen their cost recovery erode, leaving them less time to spend with their patients. Pharmacists have not seen a fee increase in this province for 13 years, and currently they are paid \$6.47 to dispense drugs in the ODB. Yet a study shows that their real costs are \$10.68.

Quality health care depends on acknowledging the work of these vital health care professionals, and begins with treating pharmacists with respect.

1340

ENGLISH CLASSES

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I'm still receiving many of these cards requesting stable funding for English as a second language.

English instruction has two categories for newcomers: (1) the regular students attending day school classes, and (2) adult learners, mainly parents, who attend day or evening school.

There have been cuts to these programs since 1991, and especially in the year 2001-02. In fact, there has been a reduction of over \$3 million. The effect of this reduction is going to be tremendous. It will have grave consequences for thousands of these newcomers. This will affect their adaptation, integration and job readiness. How will these students be able to get jobs in this province if they don't adequately learn how to speak the language of the country?

Secondly, what about those adult learners, mainly parents, who have come to this country trying to get jobs as well? How will they get jobs if they don't speak the language?

We know they will not be able to get even a caretaker's job, when they're trained to be doctors, lawyers and accountants. They will not even be able to speak the language properly.

What we're asking today is for the Minister of Citizenship to talk to the Minister of Education to increase the funding for these classes.

EDUCATION LABOUR DISPUTE

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): This morning, I, along with my NDP colleagues, joined hundreds of teachers who have been locked out of their classrooms in Toronto. That means 69,000 students have been locked out, too. Let me be clear: these teachers are not on strike. They want to go back to their classrooms and continue with the negotiations. They are bitterly disappointed that the Tories are using them and our children as pre-election pawns to bolster their election platform.

The NDP has a solution that could unlock those doors tomorrow. It's a simple process that has worked very effectively in two recent strikes. The first step is the appointment of a mediator-arbitrator to facilitate a new contract. Choosing a mediator-arbitrator from a list of three names acceptable to both the board and the Ontario Elementary Catholic Teachers' Association is the

best way to proceed. It has been used successfully before, at the advice of the NDP, in Simcoe-Muskoka and in the city of Toronto workers' strike. You'll all remember that.

Secondly, the Conservatives must delete the contentious second part of this back-to-work legislation, which is the first step toward their strike-ban platform promise. The NDP cannot and will not support legislation that attacks teachers and continues this war in our schools that started way back with John Snobelen.

NDP House leader Peter Kormos tabled an amendment today to the Conservative back-to-work legislation. Support this amendment and get these kids back in the classroom.

SECRETS OF RADAR MUSEUM

Mr Bob Wood (London West): I rise today to tell the Legislature about a new museum, called the Radar Museum, which had its grand opening and ribbon-cutting in London on Saturday, May 24, 2003.

The Clinton area was used as a training station for British radar technicians during the World War II. The British needed a lot of technicians and asked Canada to train some of its own young men. Thirteen of our Canadian universities agreed to do so, and 6,000 young Canadians were trained as radar mechanics. The grads were either shipped off to work on aircraft in England or kept on for further training at Clinton.

One of the driving forces behind the Radar Museum in London, Fred Bates, was one of nine from a group of 500 who were commissioned. After helping to install four out of eight radar advance systems in Canada, Mr. Bates was finally shipped to England, where he became involved with the Royal Air Force.

Radar technicians were sworn to secrecy during the war, and this oath was not lifted by the British government until 1990. This meant that radar technicians could then share with the world the history of radar.

Displays of their equipment were sent from England and toured Canada, and finally ended up in the Radome Museum in Clinton, Ontario. About three years ago, the Clinton museum closed and all the display material was put in storage. Mr Bates, with the aid of about 50 volunteers, found a spot to house the displays in the former Huron pavilion situated on the Parkwood Hospital grounds in London, and with a lot of hard work put the displays back together again to form the Secrets of Radar Museum.

I know that all members of this House will join with me in congratulating Mr Bates and his group of hard-working volunteers on the opening of their museum and thank them for bringing back a colourful and important part of Canadian history for all to see and enjoy.

LIBERAL EXPENDITURE PROJECTIONS

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): Last week my leader, Dalton McGuinty, did something no other party in Ontario history has done. He put every single

one of our promises before a forensic auditor and two senior economists to ensure that they were affordable and realistic. A forensic auditor, Jack Marmer, spent 70 hours combing through our spending commitments. Two senior economists, Warren Jestin of Scotiabank and David Hall of Vista, reviewed our expenditure and revenue projections. They agree that our plan is prudent and fiscally responsible.

On Thursday, we put forward the results of our financial plan for Ontario. It shows that, unlike the Tories or NDP, we're committed to balancing our budgets and making promises we can keep. Dalton McGuinty's plan improves health care and education while balancing the budget and holding the line on taxes.

We challenge the other parties to put their platforms through the same kind of scrutiny. Independent analysts say Ernie Eves is running a deficit. The DBRS says the Eves Magna budget shows a deficit of \$1.9 billion. The TD Bank found the Tory budget is hiding a real deficit of \$2 billion this year. Standard and Poor's says that they have inflated asset sales numbers and are inconsistent with the stated objectives to take the necessary steps to balance the budget.

Only Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberals offer real change. Choose change. Choose responsible government you can trust for a change.

ST JOSEPH'S AT FLEMING

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): A very unique and innovative facility is under construction in my riding of Peterborough. St Joseph's at Fleming is a 200-bed, state-of-the-art long-term-care facility containing the Institute for Healthy Aging. It is being built on the campus of Sir Sandford Fleming College. This long-term-care facility is the first of its kind in Canada to be built on the campus of a learning institution. It will set the standard for compassionate care and innovation.

The building was designed to exceed many Ministry of Health standards and will have the look and feel not of an institution, but of a living accommodation. Each of the eight resident home areas will accommodate 25 residents to encourage smaller, less alarming social groups.

St Joseph's at Fleming will provide special communal spaces, including living rooms, multipurpose activity rooms, a chapel and auditorium, a 50-seat classroom, as well as a greenhouse and fully contained courtyard gardens that will provide residents with access to nature while remaining secure. The Fleming child care centre and healthy aging research lab will also be housed in the facility.

This is indeed an amazing project that will not only provide four-generation interaction, but also a rich learning environment for students from Fleming. Students participating in over 20 different programs, from nursing, massage therapy and early childhood education to culinary arts, recreation and information systems, will have the opportunity to gain valuable, hands-on practical experience at this new facility.

VISITORS

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I know all members will want to join with me in welcoming students from Dallington Public School who have joined us here in the gallery today.

Brittany Shaw from Kitchener Centre; Jenna Sheppard from Oshawa; Kristian Sistilli Mandarano from St Paul's; Bryant Smith from Leeds-Grenville; Sarah Splinter from Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington; and Aja Sutton from Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant.

Please join me in welcoming our new set of pages.

NOTICE OF REASONED AMENDMENT

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I beg to inform the House that pursuant to standing order 69(c), the House leader of the third party, the member for Niagara Centre, has filed a notice of reasoned amendment to the motion for second reading of Bill 28, An Act to resolve a labour dispute between the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association and the Toronto Catholic District School Board and to amend the Education Act and the Provincial Schools Negotiations Act.

The order for second reading may therefore not be called today.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON
REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I beg leave to present the first report, 2003, of the standing committee on regulations and private bills.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr Marchese: It's not necessary, Speaker. Thank you.

VISITOR

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): I'd like to welcome Mr Satnam Singh Kainth, in the members' gallery, former leader of the opposition, Punjab legislative assembly, and former member of Parliament, India.

1350

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker: Just before we continue, I would ask all members to join me in welcoming our group of pages.

With us today we have Ryan Baulke from Simcoe-Grey; Tyler Goetti from London-Fanshawe; Caitlyn Hanley from Brant; Roisin Hartnett from Oakville, and she's joined by her dog, Penny; Spencer Henderson from Northumberland; Kelan Jylha from York North; Kaitlynn-Rae Landry from Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot; Timothy Lewis from Don Valley East; Joshua Man from Whitby-Ajax; Lucas Mol from Oxford; Sabrina Nanji from Brampton Centre; Mario Nucci from Thunder Bay-Atikokan; Robyn Perritt from Peterborough; Bridget Schrempf from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound; Nicolas Seguin from Windsor West;

VISITORS

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Culture): I'd like to welcome two guests of mine today, two bright young men from Markham, my hometown: Simon Plashkes, who just graduated from IT at Ryerson, and Mark Cotterill, who is a future filmmaker.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY
AMENDMENT ACT
(WORKPLACE VIOLENCE), 2003
LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LA SANTÉ ET LA SÉCURITÉ
AU TRAVAIL (VIOLENCE AU TRAVAIL)

Mr Bartolucci moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 51, An Act to amend the Occupational Health and Safety Act with respect to acts of workplace violence / Projet de loi 51, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la santé et la sécurité au travail en matière d'actes de violence au travail.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): This bill amends the Occupational Health and Safety Act to impose duties on employers, supervisors and workers with respect to acts of workplace violence which are defined to be acts of physical or psychological violence that persons commit in the workplace.

LABOUR RELATIONS
AMENDMENT ACT, 2003LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LES RELATIONS DE TRAVAIL

Mr Kormos moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 52, An Act to amend the Labour Relations Act, 1995 / Projet de loi 52, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1995 sur les relations de travail.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

The member for a short statement?

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): The purpose of this bill is to restore the provisions that were incorporated into the Labour Relations Act by the Labour Relations and Employment Statute Law Amendment Act, 1992, and subsequently repealed by the Labour Relations Act, 1995. The purpose of the provisions being restored is to prevent an employer from replacing striking or locked-out employees with replacement workers, scabs, a term that is defined in the bill. The bill allows replacement workers or scabs to be used only in emergencies. This restores anti-scab legislation to this province, restoring labour peace.

THE RIGHT CHOICES FOR
EQUITY IN EDUCATION ACT
(BUDGET MEASURES), 2003

LOI DE 2003
SUR LES BONS CHOIX POUR L'ÉQUITÉ
EN MATIÈRE D'ÉDUCATION
(MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES)

Mrs Ecker moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 53, An Act respecting the equity in education tax credit / Projet de loi 53, Loi concernant le crédit d'impôt pour l'équité en matière d'éducation.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1356 to 1401.

The Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Baird, John R.
Beaubien, Marcel
Chudleigh, Ted
Clark, Brad
Clement, Tony
Coburn, Brian
Cunningham, Dianne
DeFaria, Carl
Dunlop, Garfield
Ecker, Janet
Elliott, Brenda
Eves, Ernie
Flaherty, Jim
Galt, Doug
Gilchrist, Steve

Gill, Raminder
Hardeman, Ernie
Hudak, Tim
Jackson, Cameron
Johns, Helen
Johnson, Bert
Kells, Morley
Klees, Frank
Martiniuk, Gerry
Maves, Bart
Mazzilli, Frank
McDonald, AL
Miller, Norm
Molinari, Tina R.
Mushinski, Marilyn

Newman, Dan
O'Toole, John
Ouellette, Jerry J.
Runciman, Robert W.
Sampson, Rob
Sterling, Norman W.
Stewart, R. Gary
Stockwell, Chris
Tascona, Joseph N.
Tsubouchi, David H.
Turnbull, David
Wettlaufer, Wayne
Witmer, Elizabeth
Wood, Bob
Young, David

The Speaker: All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Agostino, Dominic
Bartolucci, Rick
Bisson, Gilles
Bountrogianni, Marie
Boyer, Claudette
Bradley, James J.
Di Cocco, Caroline
Dombrowsky, Leona
Duncan, Dwight
Gravelle, Michael
Hampton, Howard
Hoy, Pat

McMeekin, Ted
Parsons, Ernie
Patten, Richard
Peters, Steve
Phillips, Gerry
Prue, Michael

Brown, Michael A.
Bryant, Michael
Caplan, David
Churley, Marilyn
Conway, Sean G.
Cordiano, Joseph
Curling, Alvin

Kennedy, Gerard
Kormos, Peter
Kwinter, Monte
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Levac, David
Marchese, Rosario
Martel, Shelley

Pupatello, Sandra
Ramsay, David
Ruprecht, Tony
Sergio, Mario
Smitherman, George
Sorbara, Greg

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 45; the nays are 38.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

The minister for a short statement?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Finance): No.

The Speaker: Thank you.

CANTERBURY UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE ACT, 2003

Ms Pupatello moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr16, An Act respecting Canterbury University College.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP
AND CULTURE AMENDMENT ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LE MINISTÈRE DES AFFAIRES
CIVIQUES ET CULTURELLES

Mr Beaubien moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 54, An Act to amend the Ministry of Citizenship and Culture Act / Projet de loi 54, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le ministère des Affaires civiques et culturelles.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): The bill amends the Ministry of Citizenship and Culture Act to require the ministry to establish a program to provide information upon request to a municipality or a charitable institution about constructing a memorial to honour persons who are or were residents of Ontario and who served in the armed services of Canada in any wars outside Canada during the 20th century. If a body constructs such a memorial, the ministry is required to remit the scroll of recognition to those persons whom the memorial honours and whom the ministry considers to come within the description of persons who may properly be honoured.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY
AMENDMENT ACT
(SEXUAL HARASSMENT), 2003
LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LA SANTÉ ET LA SÉCURITÉ
AU TRAVAIL (HARCÈLEMENT SEXUEL)

1410

Mr Hoy moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 55, An Act to amend the Occupational Health and Safety Act to protect workers from sexual harassment in the workplace / Projet de loi 55, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la santé et la sécurité au travail pour protéger les travailleurs contre le harcèlement sexuel dans le lieu de travail.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): I introduce this bill in memory of Theresa Vince. This bill would amend the Occupational Health and Safety Act to require employers to protect workers from workplace-related sexual harassment, to give workers the right to refuse to work in certain circumstances after a sexual harassment has occurred, to require an investigation of allegations of workplace-related sexual harassment, and to require employers to take steps to prevent further occurrences of workplace-related sexual harassment.

TOMMY DOUGLAS ACT
(PATIENTS' BILL OF RIGHTS), 2003
LOI TOMMY DOUGLAS DE 2003
SUR LA DÉCLARATION
DES DROITS DES PATIENTS

Ms Martel moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 56, An Act to promote patients' rights and to increase accountability in Ontario's health care system / Projet de loi 56, Loi visant à promouvoir les droits des patients et à accroître l'obligation de rendre des comptes dans le système de soins de santé de l'Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): The bill codifies the rights of residents of Ontario to receive health care services in the form of a patients' bill of rights. The bill provides for the appointment of a health care standards commissioner, an officer of the Legislature, who will perform functions such as participating in the setting of health care standards and the development of complaints procedures, monitoring health care standards and making recommendations to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care and to the Legislature.

The bill establishes whistle-blower protection for the employees of providers of health care services, and the bill requires conspicuous posting of copies of the patients' bill of rights and the whistle-blower protection provisions.

RURAL RED TAPE
REDUCTION ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 VISANT À RÉDUIRE
LES FORMALITÉS ADMINISTRATIVES
RELATIVES AUX AFFAIRES RURALES

Mr Hardeman moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 57, An Act to reduce red tape with respect to rural and other matters / Projet de loi 57, Loi visant à réduire les formalités administratives relatives aux affaires rurales et à d'autres questions.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The minister for a short statement?

Hon Ernie Hardeman (Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): No. Ministers' statements, Speaker.

SOCIETY OF PROFESSIONAL
ACCOUNTANTS OF ONTARIO ACT, 2003

Mr Gill moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr6, An Act respecting the Society of Professional Accountants of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): No, thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: It's a private bill.

VISITORS

Hon Jerry J. Ouellette (Minister of Natural Resources): On a point of order, Speaker: I ask all members to join me in welcoming a class of students, Mr Gainy and Madam Pat from Monsignor Pereyma from my riding of Oshawa.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSES

EDUCATION TAX CREDIT

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Finance): Earlier today, I introduced The Right Choices for Equity in Education Act. It is legislation that supports parents' educational choices through the equity in education tax credit. The Premier announced on March 20 our intention to restore the original schedule for the delivery of the equity in education tax credit, and today's legislation, if passed, would do so.

In 2002, the tax credit reimbursed 10% of the first \$7,000 of tuition fees, for a maximum tax credit of \$700 per child. We are proposing to accelerate the tax credit to a maximum of 20% of tuition for each child in 2003, 30% in 2004, 40% for 2005, and 50% for 2006 and beyond. This credit will assist those parents who choose an education for their child that may better reflect their religious or cultural heritage or that may respond better to their child's special needs.

There were more than 580 independent schools that qualified for the equity in education tax credit in 2002. They include Montessori schools, faith-based schools, Waldorf schools, innovative teaching schools and those that provide specific instruction for students with certain disabilities.

With this additional support came requirements for additional accountability to parents. To qualify for the tax credit, independent schools already must do a criminal reference check upon hiring all employees who come into contact with children and provide full disclosure about the contents of their academic program and the achievements expected at the end of each program. Those offering Ontario secondary school diplomas must adhere to Ontario's secondary school curriculum standards.

We will also pass regulations to require independent schools to assess student achievement in the core subjects of reading, writing, and mathematics and to share that assessment with parents. Many schools already do this, but this additional requirement will ensure that all parents have the information they require to judge the performance of their child's school.

We will also require that each school verify the status of instructors who are or have been registered with the Ontario College of Teachers and share that information with parents as well.

Independent schools will also be required to tell parents and guardians where to obtain important consumer protection information.

I believe that one of the most important tasks of any government is to provide a strong public education system for our children, and our government has done this under the leadership of former Premier Harris and now Premier Eves. We have set higher standards through more rigorous curriculum, and we have implemented standardized testing so we can ensure our children are learning what they need to achieve their potential to succeed. We've created report cards that parents can understand. We've established standards for the professional development and performance appraisal of teachers in the classroom.

As he promised in his leadership campaign, Premier Eves has also increased resources for textbooks and has expanded programs like early reading and early math.

We have also substantially increased our investments in public education since we came into office. In 1995, education spending was \$12.9 billion. With our budget this spring, we have increased our investments in our schools to \$15.3 billion for this coming school year.

What's more, we've provided school boards with multi-year funding commitments to support better planning and more accountability to taxpayers and parents and to support long-term collective agreements for teachers.

That commitment to higher standards in public education and increased investments is not diminished by the government's recognition and willingness to support those parents who wish to choose another educational path for their child.

I know the Leader of the Opposition does not accept that parents should have a right to choose, and that he will take away the support for families who may wish to educate their children according to their religious or cultural beliefs.

On this side of the House, we do not believe that the government knows best when it comes to making educational choices for one's child. That is the responsibility of parents. Our job, as government, is to continue to build a strong public education system that provides our students with the tools they need to succeed and to support parents in the choices they make for their children.

I welcome the support from the members opposite.

RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Hon Ernie Hardeman (Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I'm pleased this afternoon to introduce the Rural Red Tape Reduction Act, 2003. As the members may recall, this bill was originally introduced last December 11. In March of this year, the session was prorogued before the bill had an opportunity to move through the legislative process. It is my honour and privilege to reintroduce it in the House today.

Government red tape is a drag on the economy. International and national economic development organizations say that it is a key factor limiting competitiveness, investment and job creation. Our government has long recognized this fact, and we have consistently recognized that removing red tape is an effective way of promoting economic development.

The Rural Red Tape Reduction Act, 2003, if passed, would encourage economic growth, improve the environment for investment, reduce red tape and remove barriers to job growth in rural Ontario.

This bill amends a number of pieces of legislation. The amendments respond to issues and problems identified by rural businesses during consultation over the past four years. For example, the Rural Red Tape Reduction Act, 2003, includes measures to enhance self-governance for veterinarians. It includes measures to remove burdens placed on farm implement dealers, distributors and manufacturers and the farm communities they serve. It also includes amendments to the Co-operative Corporations Act that, if passed, would help improve the administration of cooperatives.

1420

This government recognizes the regional diversity of Ontario's communities and their important contributions

to the province's prosperity. Our government's commitment to economic development in Ontario's rural communities is well documented. We've earmarked \$400 million for rural Ontario infrastructure to the Ontario small town and rural development initiative, or OSTAR. To date, we've invested in 82 projects under the rural economic development, OSTAR RED, program, which are generating \$427 million in new rural economic activity.

We've been piloting resource jump teams to help communities address locally identified challenges. We've developed the business retention and expansion tool kit to help communities retain local jobs.

We've set up a Web-based tool to help communities get the information they need to plan their economic futures. It's called rural economic development data and intelligence, or REDDI. Recently, we launched COBRA, or Connect Ontario: Broadband Regional Access, which will bring high-speed telecommunications to businesses in northern and rural communities.

In the April 30 throne speech, we committed to unveiling a comprehensive rural strategy aimed at addressing the concerns raised by people living in rural communities. In that throne speech, we also pledged more than \$1.6 billion to help build the infrastructure rural communities need to support a growing economy.

The Rural Red Tape Reduction Act is part of a red tape reduction plan that will also address Ontario regulations, programs and policies that affect the people of rural Ontario. The Rural Red Tape Reduction Act, 2003, is a demonstration of our commitment to building sustainable businesses and stronger rural communities. Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, for allowing me a few moments to explain it to you.

GRAPE AND WINE INDUSTRY

Hon Tim Hudak (Minister of Consumer and Business Services): I am pleased that the Ernie Eves government is introducing proposed legislation as part of the Rural Red Tape Reduction Act that would amend the Liquor Control Act and make our domestic wine industry even more competitive.

This government is committed to strengthening the competitiveness of our domestic wine industry, creating jobs and further developing Ontario's growing reputation for our premium wines. This proposed amendment will cut red tape and give VQA wineries the ability to partner together to promote VQA wines. As you know, VQA wine is made from 100% Ontario grapes and meets the highest possible standards.

I'm very proud of the work the Ernie Eves government has done to this date in promoting Ontario's VQA wines. I'm happy to say that through the efforts of this government, the LCBO and the grape and wine industry have been able to grow the VQA wine category. In fact, VQA wine sales have grown by more than 20% since last year through the LCBO and we are confident the proposed amendment will further grow our grape and wine

industry, which means more jobs in agriculture, more investment in agri-tourism and agribusiness in rural Ontario.

EDUCATION TAX CREDIT

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I want to respond to the Minister of Finance's comments on the funding for private schools and to say that indeed my leader and our party are against it, and the reason is spelled out by the minister herself in a letter to the United Nations, where she outlined the government's own major concerns about proceeding down this road of funding private schools.

Here's what she said, among other things: "Extending funding to private schools would result in fragmentation of the education system in Ontario and undermine the goal of universal access to education." That's what Minister Ecker said less than three years ago in response to the very proposal she's bringing forward.

The then Premier wrote a very strongly worded letter. Among other things, he said, "Proceeding with this plan would remove from our existing public education system at least \$300 million per year, with some estimates as high as \$700 million."

Then-Premier Harris said this: "Obviously such an action would run directly counter to Ontario's long-standing commitment to public education." Premier Harris, in a letter dated January 18, 2000, called this plan that the minister introduced today "a crusade to fragment and weaken our public education system in Ontario." Then-Premier Harris called it a crusade to fragment and weaken our public education system. That's what he said less than three years ago. The then Minister of Education spelled out clearly her strong, strong objections to proceeding with the very bill that she introduced today.

So I say to the public of Ontario, this is what the campaign will be all about, among other things. We will quote the then Minister of Education specifically spelling out grave concerns about proceeding down this route. The then Premier called it a crusade to fragment and weaken the public education system, and you have the nerve today, on the eve of an election, to bring this in for purely political reasons and against the public education system.

RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): It's nice to see this bill in front of us again. Certainly there are aspects to this piece of legislation that are most important and most welcome in the rural community in Ontario, but the delay that this government continues to impose—I look at the Farm Implements Act changes that are being made. The member for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant had a private member's bill in December 2001, and yet here we are a year and a half later, and farm implement dealers all across this province are waiting for this legislation. It's dilly-dallying. You've talked about a

commitment to rural Ontario, but you put rural Ontario on the backburner in dealing with this private member's bill.

You talk about the Nutrient Management Act changes. The loopholes that this government left in place were oversight at best. Now this government is doing its best to try and undertake damage control to fix the Nutrient Management Act. We supported section 60 of the Nutrient Management Act, which called for province-wide standards to end the patchwork of municipal bylaws. Yet when the legislation was passed, you left that loophole in place. Hopefully, with this legislation, if it does pass and the House doesn't prorogue because of an election, it can get through and this loophole can be closed.

Hopefully the Minister of Agriculture can explain to the agricultural community, with the phase-in not taking place until 2008, what is going to prevent municipalities from putting the screws to those farmers on category 1 to 3 farms. How is she going to ensure that municipalities aren't going to try and skirt the Nutrient Management Act and the Planning Act to try and hamper individual farmers who want to make improvements to their agricultural operations, even though things are going to be put back until the year 2008? You have to look at, for example, the cattle industry in this province. Less than 1% of the farms in the cattle industry are currently protected by the proposed changes to the Nutrient Management Act. What is the minister going to do to ensure that municipalities aren't getting in the way of farmers who want to make new investments?

GRAPE AND WINE INDUSTRY

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): We'll talk about the LCBO for a second. Remember what the last part of LCBO is: it is Ontario. Yet LCBO has consistently delisted international-award-winning VQA wines, wines delisted over and over again. We should be putting Ontario first and not allowing the LCBO to leave Ontario grape growers and wineries in the lurch.

EDUCATION TAX CREDIT

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): First I want to respond to the Conservatives' announcement yet again today that they want to spend more money to entice parents to take their children out of public schools and send them to private schools. That's really what was announced here today.

I want everyone to note that the private school tax credit will now, as envisioned, cover tuition fees of up to \$7,000 a year. I wonder how many working parents across this province could ever afford \$7,000 per child in tuition fees. This clearly isn't aimed at the majority of people in Ontario. This is clearly aimed at people who already have sizable incomes and who want other people to pay to send their children to a private school. That is the long and the short of it. This is all about continuing to

underfund the public school in my neighbourhood, the public schools in our neighbourhoods, while the Conservatives say to people, "Oh, if you don't like the public school anymore because we've underfunded it, here's some money. Send your child to a private school."

1430

I want people across Ontario to know what New Democrats think about that. New Democrats believe that if someone wants to send their child to a private school, that is a private decision. You pay for it yourself. Don't ask the public to fund your private school.

On this occasion, I think it's worthwhile noting some other quotations about this issue. I've been puzzled by the fact that I've found all these references to the Liberal position. For example, Michael Bryant, Liberal energy critic, says on this issue of public funds for private schools, the private school tax credit, "I can't suck and blow on this. I've got to support it. It's a step in the direction of equity. So I support that."

Or Monte Kwinter, the Liberal critic for enterprise and opportunity: "I've always supported full funding for faith-based schools. There should be some recognition in the provincial tax regime. I'm personally delighted that that's happened. I don't think anyone accepts the argument that Catholic schools should be funded and others not."

Dalton McGuinty: "I have said in the past that there is a fairness issue here regarding the funding of independent schools, and that is something we recognize."

I understand where the Conservatives are on this. You want public funds for private schools. I'm hard-pressed to figure out where the Liberals are. They seem to be in two positions at the same time.

RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I note that the government has also introduced another rural red tape bill. I just want to remind people across Ontario: remember when the Conservatives cut the Ministry of the Environment? They cut all the water inspectors from the Ministry of the Environment. Go back and check the record. They said that was doing away with red tape. Remember when the Conservatives downloaded responsibility for protecting water systems on to municipalities? They said that was cutting red tape. Remember when the Conservatives basically opened the door to the factory farms, which created such a problem in terms of water quality in rural Ontario? The Conservatives said that was cutting red tape.

I think people better look very carefully when the Conservatives talk about cutting red tape. What we've experienced so far is that that means cutting health protection, it means cutting environmental protection and it means downloading more costs and more responsibilities on to local municipalities.

I think what this bill is really all about is that the Conservatives don't want anyone to notice their record in rural Ontario. They don't want people to notice that more

and more communities in rural Ontario can't get a family doctor and have chronic shortages of nurses. They don't want people to notice that this government has closed school after school after school in rural Ontario. They don't want people to notice that this is a government that closed agricultural office after agricultural office in rural Ontario. They don't want people to notice that land ambulances were downloaded on to rural municipalities that don't have the funding to cover land ambulances, and yet the province says, "You're on your own."

This is about covering up your record, and it won't work.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I move that notwithstanding standing order 96(d), the following changes be made to the ballot list for private members' public business: Mr Cordiano and Mr Bradley exchange places in order of precedence, such that Mr Cordiano assumes ballot item 16 and Mr Bradley moves up and assumes ballot item 13.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

ORAL QUESTIONS

SARS

Ms Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): My question is for the Minister of Health. Minister, it has been more than two months since SARS hit Ontario. In that time, it wasn't until hundreds of part-time nurses could not safely report to work because of the outbreak that you finally realized we had a problem with nurses working part-time and not enough nurses working full-time. You said that one of the things we need to do in the "new normal" of health care is to have more full-time nurses. Everyone recalls the statement: "I'm surprised by how many part-time nurses we have."

Minister, can you tell us—this House, the people of Ontario and specifically the nurses—what you have done in this last month to ensure that we have more full-time nurses working in Ontario today?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I hope the honourable member is not suggesting that we have nothing to learn from infection control procedures and the impact of those on the health care system. If the honourable member has all of the answers, perhaps she would like to share some of them with the rest of the House.

In the meantime, we feel that we do have things to learn and we feel that it is important to listen to our excellent nurses in the field, our wonderful physicians, our epidemiologists, our public health officials. We are doing so through the expert panel which was announced, I believe, about 10 days ago, because that will be an important means by which we understand exactly what went right and what can be improved upon as a result of the SARS outbreak.

From my perspective, this is an ongoing process. There are things we can learn and there are things we can do.

Ms Pupatello: What we need is not just talk but action.

What you said after SARS hit Ontario was that you were surprised at how many nurses are working part-time. You said you didn't realize how many were working part-time. What we realize, because of the outbreak and our ability to respond to it, is that we have to have more full-time nurses, which nurses have been telling you for eight years. After eight years of watching \$400 million being spent to fire nurses; watching them travel to the United States to work, especially in border communities; watching nurses work two and three part-time jobs just to make a living, we realize we have a problem.

Our greatest fear today is that we are going to become complacent, that we will just have words and no action. Unfortunately, the new normal is becoming the status quo, so don't suggest today that you are going to wait for some long review before we actually get moving on hiring full-time nurses.

Minister, we need an answer. In this last month, what have you specifically done to make sure we are hiring full-time nurses, not part-time?

Hon Mr Clement: The honourable member might be aware that in the last month we have had a debate about the budget in this Legislature, a budget which continues our previous commitments for new nurses in the province of Ontario. To date, we've invested \$800 million of public money for new nursing positions. We expect to graduate over 8,000 nurses in the province over the next three years. We will create 750 new nurse practitioner positions by 2005, and 117 of those will begin practising this spring. We are the first province to create a chief nursing officer and the nursing secretariat. The honourable member was around when I announced to the RNAO and the RPNAO that we have a new-hire in that position, which was taken very, very positively by the nursing profession. If the honourable member wants action, on this side of House we have excelled in action.

Ms Pupatello: Minister, here is the problem with your words. You've been saying the same thing for eight years, and what we have today, because of all the talk over the last eight years, is too many part-time nurses and not enough full-time nurses. Every time you attend a nurses' function, they tell you the same thing: we have too many part-time and not enough full-time. SARS gave us the reality check. In the new normal that is now, we

understand, becoming the status quo, part-time nurses just can't take care of these issues as well. We need to move them to full-time.

1440

We have a plan to hire 8,000 nurses, and we are telling the people how we are paying for that. You have yet to do it. You have made the same announcements for the last eight years, and today in Ontario we have part-time nursing. Even the nurses told you they needed full-time nurses. After eight years of telling you, you said, "I'm surprised how many part-time nurses we have."

Minister, we don't want talk. We want action. It's going to take a Dalton McGuinty government, an Ontario Liberal government, to bring full-time nurses to Ontario.

Hon Mr Clement: There are so many ways that I could reply to that. It's clear that a Dalton McGuinty government would raise taxes by \$5 billion. It's clear that a Dalton McGuinty government would refuse to allow new public-private partnership hospitals to be built, which would increase accessibility and allow us to hire more nurses in those institutions. It's quite apparent that Dalton McGuinty doesn't want more access to diagnostic services. All of that is clear.

All I can tell the honourable member is that in the last five to seven years we have acted. That is why there are more than 12,000 new nursing positions in the province of Ontario, funded directly by the province to ensure that our nursing profession gets the support it needs from the government. We are proud of that record.

So our talk is more than talk. It's actually action, and it's action we're most proud of.

EDUCATION LABOUR DISPUTE

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): I have a question for the Premier. I want to speak to you about your responsibility as leader of this province toward the children in the Catholic school board in Toronto. Seven days ago you took 69,000 children in that school board hostage to your political agenda. You appeared personally in expensive TV ads promoting your policy on the same day that the board did a phony lockout of those students.

Since that time, Premier, did you pick up the phone and try and solve that strike? No. Instead you brought a bill into this House that you knew would keep this stunt going; a bill that would poison relations in those schools, that would let those kids down.

We have three arbitrators who are agreeable to all sides. We have been working through the weekend to get both sides to talk to each other. We asked your representative, Mr Giorno, whether he would work this weekend or whether anyone from your office would, and nothing happened.

You know your bill will poison the atmosphere for students. How do you explain this to the parents and the people of Toronto, Mr Premier? Why don't you want a peaceful solution?

Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): We have always said that the best way of resolving these disputes is through negotiations and both parties being at the bargaining table. We have indicated that to both parties. But ultimately, at the end of the day, the responsibility lies with them.

For our part, we are putting students first. There is a piece of legislation before this House that your friends over here are using procedural motions to try and delay and that you have voted against. There is nothing in that legislation that doesn't put students first.

Mr Kennedy: A few years ago, there was an Ernie Eves who took 35 hours to keep the people in his riding talking when there was a dispute, an Ernie Eves [failure of sound system]—you have to have a right to strike. Now we have you making these 69,000 kids hostage to your political agenda.

Why don't you instead admit that your agenda is about turmoil? The Premier has not provided any constructive assistance to end the lockout of the students that's taking place in Toronto. Instead, we have a government prepared to play games with these students' education.

So I'm going to ask you again, Mr Premier: are you prepared to pick up the phone, roll up your sleeves and do something constructive to end this lockout and not make them wait till next week, potentially, to have that happen?

Hon Mr Eves: Mr Speaker, through you to the honourable member: (a) we've already done that; (b) there's nothing in the bill before the House that talks about taking away anything. What we're talking about is putting students first in this province.

The honourable member will know that the bill that's before the House calls for a mediator and an arbitrator to resolve this dispute. It says that the person must have knowledge of educational matters. It says that they must have knowledge of arbitration and mediation proceedings.

Which one of the five things does the honourable member disagree with? Do you not agree that teachers should be fully completing report cards with comments and grades? Do you not believe that teachers should be administering tests? Do you not believe that teachers should be meeting with parents at parent-teacher meetings? Do you not agree with maintaining co-operative education placements as part of a teacher's duties? Do you not agree that teachers should be participating in graduation events? Which one of those do you not agree with?

Mr Kennedy: I guess we don't have the Ernie Eves who worked for 35 hours to try and get his people together. That was a long time ago, apparently. We don't have a Premier prepared to put the 69,000 kids in the Toronto board ahead of his political interests. We have a very simple and easy test for you.

Mr Premier, if you're prepared to do your job on behalf of those 69,000 kids, then agree right now that the three House leaders can meet and hammer out a deal that will protect the interests of both sides and put those

69,000 kids back to school tomorrow. End the lockdown. If the Premier doesn't do that, your actions will speak for you.

Hon Mr Eves: The honourable members on that side of the House can solve this problem and put those 69,000 kids first by voting for the bill. We'd be happy to move the bill.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. This morning, people who were trying to find out how serious the latest SARS outbreak is couldn't get answers because the public health units involved didn't have enough people to answer the phones. The reason they don't have enough people to answer the phones is because—here's their dilemma: Do they fight SARS? Do they fight West Nile? Do they look after tuberculosis? Do they do food inspections? That's the situation they're in. In fact, health units are being forced to cannibalize one program today to fight another crisis out there that they weren't ready for. Dr Sheela Basur has put it this way: "We would try to beg, borrow and steal staff from other health units. It's like ripping the bandage off one wound to stop the bleeding of another."

Premier, is this what you call properly protecting the public health of the citizens of Ontario?

Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): The Minister of Health will respond very directly to the concern.

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I can certainly assure the honourable member that, as the Premier said over the weekend, we are here as a government to help our public health officials, to help our doctors, nurses and other medical professionals to ensure that we fight the latest flare-up and that we get to a better place as soon as possible.

I can tell the honourable member that it was an Ernie Eves government that announced we were going to have SWAT teams of dedicated public health officials available in any situation where, if there was a surge of phone calls or a surge of investigations that have to take place in a short period of time, they have the necessary resources. This is a commitment that the Ontario government has fulfilled, and we will continue to do so.

Mr Hampton: Oh, please. You make another announcement. The reality is they didn't have enough staff to answer the phones. The reality is that when you talk to public health units out there, they will tell you that you haven't yet covered the money they spent to fight SARS in the initial outbreak. They have no idea if they're going to get it. You made an announcement about West Nile; you tried to pretend that you were going to cover 100% of the costs of fighting West Nile. You read the fine print: yes, you covered the cost of the larvicide, but the municipalities and the health units have to go out there and cover the cost for the staff to apply it. They have to do all the expensive stuff. That's what you're forcing them to do. You're forcing them, day in and day

out, to take staff from SARS to fight West Nile, to take staff from West Nile to fight SARS, to ignore things like food inspection or tuberculosis.

I ask you again, is that your definition of properly protecting the public health of the people of Ontario?

Hon Mr Clement: Mr Speaker, please allow me the opportunity to correct the record on several fronts here. First of all, it's our government that made a comprehensive, unprecedented commitment of \$33 million this year to fight the West Nile virus, 100% of the costs of covering the larviciding. So we are living up to the commitment for the public health of Ontario.

I've been very clear: we have had an unprecedented situation. The Premier has made it crystal clear that our government stands side by side with public health officials, side by side with hospitals and other aspects of the health care system, with our health care workers, to ensure that the resources are there, that our funding is there and, of course, our expertise, as you know we have because we have some of the best experts in the world. That is the commitment of the Premier, that is the commitment of this government and we are following through.

1450

Mr Hampton: Minister, here's the record with respect to SARS: health units out there that have literally stretched themselves to the point of exhaustion still don't know if they're going to get the money from you to cover that incredible expenditure. Here's your record on West Nile: last year, 17 people died and over 1,000 people became very sick. Why? First of all, you cancelled the lab that would have helped to diagnose the problem with West Nile; you laid off the scientists; the labs you had available became backlogged; and then you didn't get the samples to Winnipeg until January, February or March. That is your record. So I ask you again, Minister: when health units are overstretched, when they don't even have enough people to answer the phone, is this your idea of properly protecting the public health of the people of Ontario?

Hon Mr Clement: The commitment of this government has been unprecedented. Last year, we were there in terms of the funding formula for the West Nile virus. This year we've topped it up. We've made an absolute commitment for a made-in-Ontario solution to get the laboratory testing up to our standards so we don't have to rely on Winnipeg when nine other provinces do.

Certainly our commitment is there. If the honourable member would take time to understand the dollars and cents and the commitment we've made historically, the fact is that this has been an unprecedented year, but our support has been unprecedented as well. I don't know how more crystal clear the Premier of Ontario could be but to say we are going to be there. We're going to be there financially, we're going to be there morally, we're going to be there in terms of our resources, we're going to be there in terms of our expertise. We have made that commitment. The Premier has been crystal clear and we are proud of him.

PENSION PLAN

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): To the Premier again: the minister says you'll be there, and you don't even have enough people to answer the phones.

Last week, I brought to your attention the tragic story of the members of the Participating Co-operatives of Ontario trustee pension plan. Their plan has been fatally damaged by a complete breakdown in the regulation of pensions in this province. Also last week, the federal superintendent of financial institutions stated that 60 of the 370 defined benefit pension plans that Ottawa regulates were on a watch list and were suffering from very serious underfunding problems.

Premier, your government is directly responsible for the regulation of 2,800 defined benefit pension plans and it is common knowledge that those plans are being rocked by a three-year slide in the stock markets and your failure to regulate them properly. How many of the 2,800 defined pension plans that you are responsible for are in trouble, and when are you going to tell the public that they're in trouble?

Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): The Minister of Finance will be happy to respond.

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Finance): The honourable member should be aware that protection of pension plans in this province is regulated and that there are requirements for pension plans to file reports as to their financial status with the regulator. If there are problems, the regulator works with them to solve those problems. Again, there are requirements for how much is required to be put into the fund to make sure it stays a viable financial entity. FSCO is doing its job.

Mr Hampton: It seems we have a Premier who wants to make the announcements but doesn't want to answer the questions.

Pension plans are under siege and you're doing nothing, just as you did nothing with the co-operatives of Ontario pension plan. Last Friday, three leading pension consulting firms came to the very disturbing conclusion that private pension plans face a shortfall of \$225 billion. That's roughly 20% of the national gross domestic product. One of the authors of that report concluded, "Plans will be terminated. That's going to make the press. There's going to be a loss of confidence. Regulators are in a very tough spot."

Premier, people need reassurance that you have learned a lesson from the collapse of the Participating Co-operatives of Ontario trustee pension plan. They need to know that you are taking aggressive action to safeguard their hard-earned retirement savings.

You're responsible for ensuring the health of the vast majority of Ontario's employment pension plans. I ask you again, how many of Ontario's defined benefit pension plans are in trouble because of serious underfunding and your government's failure to regulate them properly?

Hon Mrs Ecker: I don't think that scaremongering here is going to help the situation at all. There are requirements for pension plans to file reports and to file the financial stability and status of that plan. Those are being adhered to. The regulator is working with pension plans. If there need to be adjustments, there are requirements to do that. I think it also underlines the importance for employers and employees, when they are negotiating particular collective agreements, to be sensitive to the ups and downs of pension fund financing.

To be very, very clear, the regulator adheres to the requirements in the legislation, there are reporting requirements, and they are required to top up when that is required. We are watching that situation, monitoring and working with the pension plans to ensure that workers' pensions are protected.

FRAUD INVESTIGATION

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): My question is for the Minister of Public Safety and Security. On May 16, the Ontario Provincial Police charged a senior official in your ministry with fraud. The charges were laid after a company that was bidding on a project in your ministry gave that employee a \$110,000 personal mortgage. Neither you nor the OPP have revealed the name of the company involved. What company provided that mortgage, and what project were they bidding on?

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Minister of Public Safety and Security): As the member opposite knows, there were charges laid and there is an investigation underway. I don't think it would be appropriate to get into the details or the naming of individuals or perhaps even companies, but I will take the question as notice and determine with the officials within the ministry if it is indeed appropriate to release the name of the company involved.

Mr Levac: Minister, the person charged by the OPP is responsible for the adult infrastructure renewal project in your ministry. In that role, he would have overseen the construction and repairs of all of the province's jails and prisons.

I think it is incumbent upon you to release the name of the company that provided that mortgage, because you need to tell us whether or not they have been disqualified from bidding on government work pending this investigation, whether or not they have any other government contracts, and whether or not those contracts themselves are being reviewed. Would you do that for us, Minister?

Hon Mr Runciman: As I hope members would know, I have no reluctance with respect to making available whatever information is appropriate to be made available, not just to this House but to the public at large. Once I have determined, with respect to the advice from the legal branch within the ministry and the Ministry of the Attorney General, what is indeed appropriate in terms of the OPP as well, we will make whatever information is deemed to be appropriate public. There is no question about that.

1500

SARS

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): My question is for the Minister of Tourism, the Honourable Brian Coburn, MPP for Ottawa-Orléans. Last week you took part in Molson Canada's \$100,000 Happy Hour, intended to assist hospitality workers who have suffered financial loss as a result of SARS. It was a series of events held in Toronto in an attempt to revitalize the city and get people out in the wake of recent challenges we have all faced. Minister, can you tell me what our government is doing to aid businesses and the people of Toronto post SARS?

Hon Brian Coburn (Minister of Tourism and Recreation): I thank the hard-working member for Peterborough. I had, along with my parliamentary assistant, Wayne Wettlaufer, who is—

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs): He's a good man.

Hon Mr Coburn: Yes, he is a hard-working member as well.

We've been very active on this issue right from the outset. We're meeting with our tourism partners and stakeholders right across the industry and hearing their advice and getting suggestions from them on how to combat this issue from a tourism perspective.

I co-hosted a federal-provincial meeting a little over a week ago here in Toronto where I met with my federal and provincial colleagues to discuss some of the challenges we're facing right across the country as a result of SARS and how we can work together to combat these challenges.

As well, we were happy to see Premier Eves announce the \$128-million aid initiative which passed through this Legislature unanimously a few weeks ago. This package is aimed at rehabilitating Toronto and Ontario and our image in the eyes of the world. Furthermore, Minister Flaherty and I will be going out and meeting some of our counterparts in the nearby states to share the message to come to Toronto, that—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I'm afraid the minister's time is up.

Mr Stewart: I'm pleased to hear how quickly our government responded to the needs of the city, as well as the rest of Ontario. I'm very interested, as well, in the rest of Ontario.

It's also great to see how so many people are rallying around Toronto to give a hand and get this great city back on its feet, whether that be the partners at Molson, the Mirvish family or the Blue Jays. I know we can all get through this if we continue to work together.

Minister, can you tell me more specifically how Premier Eves's \$128-million announcement will be spent to assist Ontarians?

Hon Mr Coburn: Again, I thank the member for the question. The \$128-million announcement is part of a two-year recovery plan to rebuild global confidence in Toronto and Ontario as world-class travel destinations.

Some \$66.8 million will be identified and used in a multimedia approach to reassure residents and potential visitors to both Toronto and Ontario that they are safe travel destinations and to convince travellers to come and experience Ontario this summer.

A long-term recovery campaign targeting Ontario residents, US border states and overseas markets will also be undertaken to rebuild Toronto as the primary destination of choice for events, conventions and leisure travel. An intensive public relations campaign, including the mounting of several major events in the greater Toronto area to gain an international profile and special marketing support for events such as the Molson Indy, which we announced this morning, Caribana, the Toronto International Film Festival and events right across the province, will be part of that intensive marketing campaign for the summer season.

PICKERING NUCLEAR
GENERATING STATION

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): My question is to the Minister of Energy. Minister, you and the Premier committed in November of last year to hold an inquiry—"investigation" was the word you used—into the delays at Pickering and you promised you were going to start that within days. That was over half a year ago. It is now clear that the government is not so much dragging its feet on the Pickering investigation but burying its head in the sand, unable to handle the truth as to the government's mismanagement on Pickering. Will the government admit that it has absolutely no intentions of holding this Pickering investigation and that in fact, at least until the next election is called, we are not going to see an investigation of Pickering at all.

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs): The member opposite attributes words to me that simply aren't the case. At no time have we ever used the word "inquiry," at no time have we ever used the word "investigation." What we have said is that a review is in order and that we'll appoint a review. The answers to his two questions are no and no.

Mr Bryant: I know the government doesn't like to hold to its press releases but in your press release of November 11 it said "investigation."

The point is that we need to get to the bottom of what happened in Pickering and people just don't believe you when you say you can't find somebody to head up the inquiry. Everybody knows that the Provincial Auditor has said that he would do it. He looked into the success story at Bruce. He can surely look into the failure at Pickering. Everybody knows there are people available who could head up this inquiry, investigation, review, whatever you want to call it. It doesn't take a nuclear physicist to look into this. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to ask people why it is that something that was supposed to happen three years and \$2.5 billion ago hasn't happened and continues not to happen to date.

I say it is clear the government decided that it didn't want to answer any more questions about what was going on in Pickering in November and so you set up this charade to shield you from further questions by saying that an investigation-inquiry-review was coming, and you continue to split hairs.

Why will you just not admit that the government never had any intention of holding an investigation-review-inquiry into what happened at Pickering because the government simply does not want to have any bad news about the way it mismanaged the Pickering disaster before or during or after the next election?

Hon Mr Baird: I take exception to the characterization the member opposite has used. There indeed have been some major problems, some major concerns, both with respect to the timeline and with respect to costs at the Pickering nuclear station. We take those issues tremendously seriously and we will be coming forward in short order to announce a review process. We think that's important, not just for the taxpayers, but also for future supply and what we can learn for reactors 1, 2 and 3.

I would take issue with another thing the member opposite said. He said that you don't need a nuclear physicist. I think we do need someone with a capacity to look at nuclear technology and its application at the Pickering station. I think that would be wise and appropriate.

DECRIMINALIZATION OF MARIJUANA

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): My question is to the Attorney General. Over the past few months, we've heard reports stating that the federal government is set to introduce a bill that would lead to the decriminalization of marijuana. Let's make no mistake: this decision to decriminalize marijuana has far-reaching consequences, and serious discussion must occur between Ottawa and the provinces over this proposed legislation.

In my riding of Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale, many of my constituents are very concerned over Ottawa's proposal and have not yet been appeased by the federal government's assurances to keep this dangerous drug out of the hands of children.

Even Anne McLellan, the federal health minister, has stated that marijuana "can lead to addiction, it can lead to all sorts of situations." She even admits that there is a strong possibility that the usage of marijuana will increase if it's decriminalized.

Could you please explain some of the reasons that Ontario has strong hesitations over Ottawa's plan to decriminalize marijuana?

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): First of all, I find the federal Liberals' actions surrounding their plans to decriminalize marijuana very disconcerting. While federal Justice Minister Cauchon has briefed US Attorney General John Ashcroft about Ottawa's plans, Ontario has yet to be consulted properly, nor have we received

any kind of indication of what the legislation is going to be about. As over \$1 billion is traded between the US and Canada every day, Ontario has the most to lose if the Americans decide to tighten their border due to their concerns over marijuana being smuggled into their country.

The US ambassador to Canada, Paul Cellucci, and John Walters, the director of the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy, have even stated that tighter border measures could occur. This could lead to a devastating effect on our economy.

I think the federal Liberals should focus on real issues important to Canadians about toughening our criminal laws, like our Youth Criminal Justice Act, and improving our DNA—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The Attorney General's time is up. Supplementary?

Mr Gill: I agree with the Attorney General that the decriminalization of marijuana could lead to tighter border controls. As many of my constituents work at the DaimlerChrysler plant in Bramalea, there's a strong potential for job losses. I know none of the people in this House would wish that to happen. Speaking with my constituents, they are more concerned about keeping our community safe and would prefer to see Ottawa crack down on crime against our children and have the federal Liberals implement a national sex offender registry. Could you please explain the dangers if the federal Liberals decriminalize marijuana?

1510

Hon Mr Sterling: There's a great deal of concern by our American friends with regard to the importing or the smuggling of marijuana across the Canadian border.

People must be aware that today's marijuana, due to the technological advances in growing and cultivating including indoor hydroponics, is much more potent than it was a couple of decades ago. THC, the psychotropic and addictive ingredient that makes the user high, is today 30 times more potent than it was during the 1980s. This can lead to devastating effects, including increased addiction and other damaging health effects. In fact, marijuana is so addictive that the US drug czar John Walters stated on Canada AM on May 16 of this year that teenagers in the United States seeking treatment for marijuana—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Sorry, Attorney General, the time is up.

PICKERING NUCLEAR GENERATING STATION

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): After that, I have to ask another question of the Premier. Last week we learned once again that your government is wrong when you say that the Pickering nuclear station would be producing power by the end of June. I think you knew this all along. That's why you're bringing dirty diesel generators to people's neighbourhoods this spring. But on November 11, you said that you would hold an inquiry to find out why the Pickering nuclear station is

three years late and \$1.6 billion over budget. Erik Peters, the Provincial Auditor—you know him; he did the review of the Bruce nuclear station—says he would relish the chance to lead the investigation. All you have to do, he says, is pick up the phone and ask.

Premier, why haven't you picked up the phone and asked the Provincial Auditor to do the review of Pickering nuclear that you promised on November 11?

Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): The Minister of Energy has already responded to this question, but perhaps the leader of the third party wasn't paying attention. There will be a review of Pickering. There will be some people on the review who actually have knowledge of nuclear operations and facilities and their workings.

Mr Hampton: Premier, on November 11 you indicated that this was going to be part of the action plan with respect to hydroelectricity. That's over 11 months ago. You're almost starting to sound like the Liberals on this issue.

I note on the Liberal Web site that the Liberals say, "Hydro's nuclear plants' performance and safety records have been dismal." But then the Liberal leader is quoted as saying, after touring the Pickering nuclear station, that the nuclear record in Ontario has been by and large a very successful and solid record. Then he says he won't rule out more expensive nuclear plants.

Premier, having two positions, like the Liberals, isn't going to save you here. Erik Peters's telephone number is 416-327-1325. He is the Provincial Auditor. He already did the review of the Bruce nuclear facility. Why haven't you called him up already and asked him to do the review of the Pickering nuclear facility?

Hon Mr Eves: The leader of the third party seems to have the innate ability to offend almost every member of the House with one comment, except for the eight around him, of course.

Having said that, we are going to have people on this review that have some knowledge of nuclear facilities and how they operate. This is not strictly a bookkeeping or auditing review. It's a review with knowledge of the nuclear industry, and I would happen to agree that we do have, by and large, a great nuclear industry in the province of Ontario, and it does generate a substantial part of hydroelectric power in this province.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): My question is for the Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services. Minister, you know the Child and Family Services Act guarantees certain rights to children in care. A child has the right to be informed of their rights, such as internal complaints procedure, the existence of the child advocate and rules for residential care. I have received two letters, including one from the former child advocate, indicating that your government is not providing this essential rights information to children in care. Tragically, six children

have died in residential care in the past six years, under your watch. Most recently, the inquest into the death of Stephanie Jobin heard Judy Finlay, the current child advocate, testify that she had been unable to provide rights materials for the past three years. She indicated the materials were being withheld and could not explain why. While your government is spending millions of dollars on partisan advertising, can you explain why you are not providing essential rights information—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I'm afraid the member's time is up.

Hon Brenda Elliott (Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services): As you know, our government has taken a number of steps to make sure children who are in a difficult situation receive the care they need, particularly through the children's aid society. We've worked hard to change the legislation so that not only would help be provided for those children in the case of abuse but also in the case of neglect. It certainly would be our intention that every piece of information that appropriately should be provided to the child would be given. If my colleague across the way wishes to speak to me specifically on this, I'd be pleased to do so.

Mrs Dombrowsky: Minister, six children have died and you've done nothing. You have legislated rights and you are ignoring them. You have been informed and you have prevented the child advocate from doing her job.

Children in care need a government to protect them. They are entitled to posters, pamphlets and other printed materials that inform them of their rights, and they're not getting them. I've spoken to the child advocate and she is the one who told me that she has, on three separate occasions, in three annual reports, indicated this fact to you. The office of the children's advocate does not even have a Web site. She's not provided with this essential printed material to pass along to the children.

Minister, you are breaking your own law and children are not getting the rights information they are entitled to. Protect our children. Tell the people of Ontario you will allow the children's advocate to do her job. Stand here today and tell her that she can provide rights information, establish a Web site and publish an annual report, which you've prevented her from doing the last three years.

Hon Mrs Elliott: To my colleague across the way I say that it was our government that in 1999 introduced the fast-tracked information system. This is an information system that allows children's aid societies to work together, to talk to each other about families who may have been involved with a family situation in another part of the province. Over 1,900 new child protection workers have been hired under our government, an 86% increase since 1995. As of December 31, 2002, 7,700 children's aid society staff have been trained under the Ontario child protection training program.

LABOUR RELATIONS

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): My question is for the Minister of Labour. Minister, I've

been reading a lot of media reports lately suggesting that there are a number of teachers' collective bargaining concerns which are leading to a lot of classroom disruptions across Ontario. I'm wondering if you could bring us up to date on this current situation.

Hon Brad Clark (Minister of Labour): There is a lot of erroneous information being circulated around the province. One of my ministry's primary objectives is to promote harmonious labour relations. In 2002, that meant 96% of all labour disputes in Ontario were settled through mutual agreement, settled through collective bargaining, and that's with the expert help of my conciliation mediators. What I can tell you right now is that we've had tremendous success in school boards across the province. Right now, 109 of 124 collective agreements in the education sector are in good standing. We have 15 schools that have yet to reach mutually agreeable settlements and 11 are working to rule. That means 450,000 kids are not receiving the services they deserve, and one has been locked out, with 69,000. We believe it's always best for the two parties to settle their differences amicably at the bargaining table. Bill 28, the bill that we introduced in this House, will actually do that. If the member opposite read the bill he would notice that it will allow them to settle the agreement mutually between themselves. It will stop the lockout and it will prevent work-to-rule campaigns. It puts 69,000 kids first. I ask the opposition to stop stalling this bill and put the kids back in school, where they deserve to be.

1520

Ms Mushinski: Thank you for that response, Minister. I'm sure you're aware that the children of the Toronto Catholic District School Board, including those in my great riding of Scarborough Centre, have been unable to attend school for more than a week now. Can you please tell me what our government has done to get our kids back to school?

Hon Mr Clark: We introduced a bill in the House called the Back to School (Toronto Catholic Elementary) and Education and Provincial Schools Negotiations Amendment Act. The opposition voted against the bill. This bill would put 69,000 students back in school; it would stop the lockout; it would prevent work-to-rule from happening in that school board. It would allow the school board and the union to work together to solve their differences, and it gives them ample opportunity to do that; it does that. A lost day of instruction is a lost opportunity for success. I'm calling on the opposition, specifically the third party, to stop stalling this bill. They should be calling the member for Toronto-Danforth at 416-325-3250. Her fax number is 416-325-3252. Tell them to stop stalling the bill. Let's get the kids back in school now.

LAYOFFS

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I have a question for the Minister of Natural Resources. On Friday, 280 workers at the Domtar softwood lumber mill

in White River were told that they would be laid off for a period of at least six months and possibly a year. This is the primary employer in a community of only 1,000 people. They'll be joining approximately 100 workers that were laid off on Thursday by Weyerhaeuser in Chapleau. They will be joining the 150 workers at Dubreuilville who are presently laid off, together with the workers at Tembec operations in Kirkland Lake and Cochrane. We'll have over 500 workers laid off in the constituency. The primary cause of the layoffs are the softening market conditions, the increasing Canadian dollar and the softwood lumber dispute. Minister, we have people at risk and we have communities at risk. What are you doing about it?

Hon Jerry J. Ouellette (Minister of Natural Resources): The softwood lumber issue is a very serious one. I've met with the players, both with the major players you've mentioned but also with a lot of the minor players within the industry. What we're trying to do is—hold fast is what I'm asked to do by all these industries. They want to make sure that the 27% countervailing duties do not continue. One of the difficulties is that other jurisdictions, such as BC, appear to be breaking from that trend. Although the federal government has the lead in negotiations, we are still trying to stand fast in support of all those industries. Those workers in the province of Ontario are very important to us and we want to keep those mills operating. We've been making sure that the wood flows and all the fibre flows through all those mills continue on to keep as many people working as possible.

Mr Brown: Well, that's cold comfort. I understand that the forest industry, Ontario and Canada, are on the same page on this issue. However, the workers in the communities cannot be cannon fodder in this battle over a trade dispute. We have people in communities all across northern Ontario who will be impacted by these specific closures. Whether they be pulp and paper mills or the local grocery store, they are going to feel significant impacts. I ask you on behalf of all the people of northern Ontario to come to the table with your colleague the Minister of Northern Development and Mines to see that significant measures are taken to protect these communities and workers from a dispute that I'm sure will be solved in the long term, but in the short term is causing huge difficulties to my constituents.

Hon Mr Ouellette: I know there is a lot of impact on the other players in the industry as well. For those who don't understand, with a softwood lumber mill, the residual fibre that's remaining will go to a pulp and paper one or to the other companies that produce goods in the fibre industry. What we've been able to do is ensure that those fibre flows to the other mills are continuing on. This is a very serious issue. We have to look at the long term with this. We've been working with the industries and we've been making sure that the other mills, such as the pulp and paper mills, continue to operate to keep those workers working in northern Ontario.

FISH AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

Mr AL McDonald (Nipissing): My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. Minister, I'd like to talk about Lake Nipissing. Lake Nipissing, as you know, is a billion-dollar asset for the north and is enjoyed by thousands. Five per cent of all fishing in Ontario takes place in Lake Nipissing. That's why proper census information is crucial to assessing the health and management of fish populations in the lake.

I was concerned earlier this month when a request was made by a local group of resource-based stakeholders for \$30,000 to conduct a spring creel survey and the full amount was not initially granted. Your ministry did offer a third of the cost of the project. I asked your ministry to find a solution, and I'm pleased to say today that additional funds have been allocated to the project. Minister, could you reconfirm this to the people of Nipissing and let them know about the future years?

Hon Jerry J. Ouellette (Minister of Natural Resources): I'd like to thank the hard-working member for Nipissing for the question. Lake Nipissing is very important to us. As mentioned, it represents 5% of the recreational fishing industry in the province of Ontario. As well, it provides thousands upon thousands of hours of recreational activity both in boating and of course fishing, as mentioned. This is very important to us. That's why I'm happy to inform the member and the House that the full \$30,000 will go to Lake Nipissing Partners in Conservation for the spring fish survey.

Mr McDonald: The people of Ontario, and especially the north, do realize how great a job the MNR does for our fisheries.

It's my understanding that the funding is one of many that your ministry has provided for Ontario recently. Could you please inform us today what other projects your ministry is involved in to protect and enhance the fisheries in Ontario?

Hon Mr Ouellette: I was very happy to announce last month that the province, through Ontario's Living Legacy program, is spending more than \$1 million for 78 projects to protect and enhance wildlife and fish opportunities across the province, including, of course, Lake Nipissing.

Our goal is to protect and enhance while at the same time improving our recreational opportunities. We want to give everyone the chance to enjoy the great natural resources we have here in Ontario. As a matter of fact, over the past four years, Ontario's Living Legacy has contributed some \$16 million to more than 800 fish and wildlife projects all across the province, for now and future generations to enjoy.

COST OF ELECTRICAL POWER

COÛT DE L'ÉLECTRICITÉ

M. Gilles Bisson (Timmins-Baie James): Ma question est pour le ministre de l'Énergie. Ministre, on sait que depuis que vous avez ouvert le marché à l'hydro

dans la province de l'Ontario, on a vu les primes de l'électricité monter d'une manière exorbitante. Vous avez essayé de nombreuses fois d'expier le problème, mais il semble que le problème persiste encore.

J'ai M. Joseph Bergeron, une personne âgée qui demeure à Kapuskasing qui, en commun avec beaucoup de monde à travers le nord de l'Ontario, a reçu sa facture de l'électricité cette année. J'ai pris le temps de comparer cette facture avec celle de l'année passée. Pour le mois de janvier l'année passée, ce M. Bergeron et sa femme, qui sont chauffés électriquement, ont payé 552,13 \$ pour l'électricité. Cette année, avec l'augmentation, on est rendu à un total de 968,28 \$. C'est 300 \$ de plus qu'ils ont payé l'année passée. Ce monde-là ne peuvent pas payer leur facture. L'électricité pourrait être fermée. Qu'est-ce que vous allez faire pour expier le problème?

L'hon John R. Baird (ministre de l'Énergie et ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones): On a fait un plan d'action le 11 novembre dernier pour assister les gens avec les taux d'électricité qui sont très hauts. On a retourné les prix de l'électricité à ceux au début de l'ouverture du marché, le 1^{er} mai dans ce cas-là.

Je veux dire aussi que ce janvier était le plus froid janvier dans l'histoire de la province. On a utilisé plus d'énergie dans cette province dans le mois de janvier qu'en aucun mois dans l'histoire de la province, parce qu'il faisait très froid. Il y a eu un grand taux dans le prix du gaz naturel qui a bien sûr affecté aussi les consommateurs dans la province.

1530

Mr Bisson: Back to the minister. It doesn't cut it when you look at the utilization of electricity for consumption. In Mr Bergeron's case, it's virtually the same as it was last year; just a little bit higher, about 10%. It doesn't add up to the over \$300 that he got.

I have another example—I've got a number of these from small businesses across the riding—and this one here is from a small grocery store. In December 2001, they paid \$1,600 for electricity; in January 2002, \$1,677; in February 2002, \$1,500. Hold on to your socks, Minister: in February of this year, \$3,816. They can't afford to keep the doors open at these type of rate increases. This, despite your cap. Clearly, the cap is not working.

Minister, the question is simple: what are you going to do to help seniors and small businesses across this province, which are being whacked by your deregulation?

Hon Mr Baird: We did take some very unprecedented measures to return the price of electricity back to what it was the day before the market opening. I wish the member opposite had had an equal concern with the effect of charges on ratepayers when he was in government, when we saw unprecedented tax increases on small businesses, unprecedented tax increases on seniors. I wish the member opposite had taken just as much interest in the rising costs on small businesses and seniors at that point.

We were pleased to bring forward legislation in Bill 210 to deal with this in a fundamental way. I would

remind the member opposite that he and his party said no. They said no to protecting small business; they said no to protecting seniors, and when we've come forward with a plan to reduce the property taxes of seniors, what did this member say again? No: no tax relief for seniors who worked hard their entire life and contributed enough. He and his party said no to a tax cut for seniors. Maybe he should go back to the drawing board and look again.

PEMBROKE JAIL

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): My question is to the Minister of Public Safety and Security, Mr Runciman. You will know, and do know very well, the concern in the upper Ottawa Valley about the future of the provincial jail at Pembroke, which was announced for closure some years ago. People in my constituency have noted that in recent weeks correctional facilities at Niagara, Brantford, Chatham, Owen Sound and Fort Frances have been given a reprieve for the foreseeable future.

Minister, could you please tell me and, more importantly, the staff, the bar and the people of Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke what your plans are for providing a very high level of correctional service to the people of the upper Ottawa Valley, and specifically the immediate and intermediate future plans for the Pembroke Jail?

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Minister of Public Safety and Security): I appreciate the member's interest in this subject. He and I have spoken to this issue on a number of occasions and I have received delegations from the riding who have a clear interest with respect to retaining a facility within the riding. That's quite understandable. We've worked with the mayor of the municipality, who, I'm assuming, with the staff developed a proposal which was reviewed. The costs at that point with the initial submission indicated that there were no cost savings to be achieved.

At that point I asked people, including the member opposite, to work with the county to see if there was a way of drawing the country into a joint submission including the city and the county that would in some way enable us to see this project go forward.

Mr Conway: Many of those discussions have been ongoing, and you're right to point to them. But since we last chatted, a couple of things have become clear. The reprieve that I mentioned was in fact granted to five other provincial jails slated to close: in Niagara, Brantford, Chatham, Owen Sound and Fort Frances. So the people in Pembroke are saying, "If it's good enough for those five locations, what can we expect?"

Moreover, in recent months it's becoming very clear that there are serious overcrowding issues at the Ottawa-Carleton Detention Centre which was, under the original plan, the primary location for the Renfrew county folks who would require correctional services.

Again, my question is, particularly on behalf of the many men and women who work at the Pembroke Jail, their families, all of the inmates, the municipal leadership

and the business community, all of whom have a vital public and economic interest in this issue, what can you specifically tell those people about your government's plans over the next couple of years for the Pembroke Jail? Will it continue indefinitely into the future until there is an alternate scheme, or are you in fact now going to indicate that the original plan was a bad plan and the people of the upper Ottawa Valley are entitled to provincially owned and operated correctional facilities in Pembroke?

Hon Mr Runciman: I recognize the importance of that facility in the community and the importance to the employees who are currently working there and the economic impact it has on the community as well. I have publicly indicated, and I've indicated to the member opposite on a number of occasions, that if we can do something for the community in order to retain this facility, I want to make it happen. I come from a small community, as does the member opposite, and I know how important this kind of institution can be. I don't want to scoop myself, but there are plans in the works for an announcement which will give, I think, some degree of comfort, and we're hoping to be able to make that announcement within the next week.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I wish to advise you of my dissatisfaction with the response I received from the Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services and I would request a late show with that minister.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I would ask the member if she would make sure the table gets advisement of that as well.

PETITIONS

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas long-term-care facilities in this province are understaffed, underfunded and ignored by the current government;

"Whereas many residents of St Catharines and of other communities in Ontario are unable to find a family doctor as a result of the growing doctor shortage we have experienced during the tenure of the Harris-Eves government;

"Whereas cancer patients in Ontario requiring radiation treatment face unacceptable delays and are often forced to travel to other jurisdictions to receive medical attention;

"Whereas many prescription drugs which would help patients with a variety of medical conditions such as

macular degeneration, multiple sclerosis, arthritis, diabetes and heart failure are inadequately covered by OHIP;

"Whereas long waiting lists for diagnostic tests such as MRIs, CT scans and ultrasounds are jeopardizing the health of many individuals already facing serious illness;

"Whereas the Harris-Eves government has now spent well over \$250 million on blatantly partisan government advertising in the form of glossy brochures and television and radio ads;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the Conservative government of Ernie Eves to immediately end their abuse of public office and terminate any further expenditure on political advertising and to invest this money into health and long-term care in the province."

I affix my signature. I'm in complete agreement, as I suspect you are.

MEDICAL REVIEW COMMITTEE

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Joanne Duchesne and Linda Pilkington have provided me with petitions addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the OHIP schedule of benefits is often unclear about its definitions of good medical practice, causing problems for patients and their physicians;

"The medical review committee of the College of Physicians and Surgeons has been aggressively clawing back payments to hard-working, conscientious doctors and thereby exacerbating physician shortages in the province;

"We, the undersigned, request the Minister of Health to suspend further reviews by the medical review committee pending a negotiated agreement of an unambiguous schedule of benefits with representatives of affected practising physicians."

That's signed by Lorraine Brown of Welland, Phyllis Repar of Fonthill and hundreds, indeed thousands, of others.

HIGHWAY 69

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): After another tragic weekend on Highway 69, I sadly have to read this petition into the record. This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas modern highways are economic lifelines for the north; and

"Whereas the stretch of Highway 69 from Sudbury south to Parry Sound is a treacherous road with a trail of death and destruction; and

"Whereas the Harris-Eves government has shown gross irresponsibility in not four-laning the stretch of Highway 69 between Sudbury and Parry Sound; and

"Whereas immediate action is needed to prevent more needless loss of life; and

"Whereas it is the responsibility of" any "government to provide safe roads for its citizens, and the Harris-Eves government has failed to do so;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to urge the" Harris-Eves "government to begin construction immediately and four-lane Highway 69 between Sudbury and Parry Sound so that the carnage on Death Road North will cease."

Of course, I affix my signature to this petition.

1540

ADOPTION DISCLOSURE

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): This petition has been read many times. I have more signatures.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas in Ontario, adopted adults are denied a right available to non-adoptees, that is, the unrestricted right to identifying information concerning their family of origin;

"Whereas Canada has ratified standards of civil and human rights in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the UN Declaration of Human Rights and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child;

"Whereas these rights are denied to persons affected by the secrecy provisions in the adoption sections of the Child and Family Services Act and other acts of the province of Ontario;

"Whereas research in other jurisdictions has demonstrated that disclosure does not cause harm, that access to such information is beneficial to adult adoptees, adoptive parents and birth parents, and that birth parents rarely requested or were promised anonymity;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario to enact revision of the Child and Family Services Act and other acts to permit adult adoptees unrestricted access to full personal identifying birth information; permit birth parents, grandparents and siblings access to the adopted person's amended birth certificate when the adopted person reaches age 18; permit adoptive parents unrestricted access to identifying birth information of their minor children; allow adopted persons and birth relatives to file a contact veto restricting contact by the searching party; replace mandatory reunion counselling with optional counselling."

I affix my signature to this petition because, of course, I fully support it.

HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ministry of Transportation has designated certain routes for a proposed mid-peninsula highway, and the major proposed route would cut a swath through the Niagara Escarpment, a UN-designated biosphere reserve;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly shall use its powers to ensure that there are no new cuts through the Niagara Escarpment to create a new highway and that the Niagara Escarpment will be protected, as envisioned in the Niagara Escarpment plan, for both current and future generations."

I have affixed my signature to that.

MINIMUM WAGE

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I have here about 1,000 signature collected by a woman in my riding who went door to door to get this particular petition signed. It reads as follows:

"To the Ontario provincial Legislature:

"Because the minimum wage has been frozen at \$6.85 since 1995 despite increases in the cost of living; and

"Because a full-time worker earning the current minimum wage in a large city is \$5,904 below the poverty line, and to reach the poverty line they would need" to have at least an increase of \$10 an hour;

"Because the minimum wage should provide people with an adequate standard of living;

"We demand that the Ontario government immediately increase the minimum wage to at least the poverty line...."

I sign the petition, as I'm fully in support of it.

GOLF COURSE ASSESSMENT

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): I continue to receive names on petitions entitled "Help Keep Greens Fees at a Reasonable Price." These signatures come from Stark's Golf Course, Woodside Greens, Greens at Renton, Pine Valley, Burford, Norwich, Sundgren, Sandust, Delhi Golf and Country Club, and Lynn Meadows.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Municipal Property Assessment Corp, MPAC, has chosen an assessment process for golf courses not relative to the property assessment that increases golf course property taxes unfairly;

"We, the undersigned, request the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to hold assessment values at last year's levels until a fairer method of assessment can be developed and implemented or a reclassification of golf course properties can be made."

I fully support this petition and affix my signature.

HOME CARE

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas well-managed and adequately funded home care is a growing need in our community; and

"Whereas the provincial government has frozen community care access centre budgets, which has meant dramatic cuts to service agency funding and services to vulnerable citizens, as well as shortened visits by front-line workers; and

"Whereas these dramatic cuts, combined with the increased complexity of care for those who do qualify for home care, has led to an impossible cost burden to home care agencies; and

"Whereas the wages and benefits received by home care workers employed by home care agencies are well below the wages and benefits of workers doing comparable jobs in institutional settings; and

"Whereas front-line staff are also required to subsidize the home care program in our community by being responsible for paying their own gas and for vehicle maintenance; and

"Whereas other CCACs and CCAC-funded agencies across the province compensate their staff between 29 cents and 42.7 cents per kilometre; and

"Whereas CCAC-funded agency staff in our own community are paid 26 cents a kilometre...;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario ... to act now to increase funding to the CCAC of Kingston, Frontenac, Lennox and Addington in order for it to adequately fund service agencies so they can fairly compensate front-line workers."

I am in full agreement and will happily sign my signature to this petition.

GARDE D'ENFANTS

M. Gilles Bisson (Timmins-Baie James): J'ai encore une pétition ici qui est soussignée par des citoyens de la ville de Timmins et qui lit comme suit:

« Appuyons des garderies à 10 \$ par jour: pétition à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario:

« Attendu que 70% des femmes de l'Ontario ayant des enfants de moins de 12 ans sont sur le marché du travail;

« Attendu que, elles et leurs familles ont absolument besoin de services de garde de qualité, sûrs et abordables;

« Attendu que l'étude sur la petite enfance réalisée pour le gouvernement conservateur par le D^r Fraser Mustard et l'honorable Margaret McCain a conclu que les services de garde de qualité favorisent un développement harmonieux des enfants; et

« Attendu que le gouvernement a réduit le financement pour les garderies réglementées plutôt que d'appuyer les familles ontariennes en investissant dans l'apprentissage et les soins offerts aux jeunes enfants;

« Pour ces motifs nous, soussignés, demandons que le gouvernement de l'Ontario adopte le plan du NPD pour des espaces de garderie à 10 \$ par jour, et qu'il commence par réduire la totalité des frais de garde pour les enfants de deux ans à cinq ans actuellement inscrits dans des garderies réglementées; que le gouvernement alloue des capitaux permanents pour agrandir les garderies existantes et pour en construire de nouvelles; que le

gouvernement finance l'équité salariale pour le personnel, et qu'il crée de nouveaux espaces de garderies à 10 \$ par jour dans cette province. »

Je soussigne cette pétition.

SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas some motorists are recklessly endangering the lives of children by not obeying the highway traffic law requiring them to stop for school buses with their warning lights activated;

"Whereas the current law has no teeth to protect the children who ride the school buses of Ontario, and who are at risk and their safety is in jeopardy;

"Whereas the current school bus law is difficult to enforce, since not only is the licence plate number required but positive identification of the driver and vehicle as well, which makes it extremely difficult to obtain a conviction;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the measures contained in private member's Bill 112, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to protect children while on school buses, presented by Pat Hoy, MPP, Chatham-Kent Essex, be immediately enacted...." The bill received unanimous consent of all parties in the past.

"We ask for the support of all members of the Legislature."

MINIMUM WAGE

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I have yet again, in this case, about 3,000 or 4,000 signatures collected by Shirley Crispin of the city of Timmins, who has actually gone door to door to have these petitions signed. My hat is off to her. Democracy in action is always a good thing. It reads as follows:

"To the Ontario provincial Legislature:

"Because the minimum wage has been frozen at \$6.85 since 1995 despite increases in the cost of living; and

"Because a full-time worker earning the current minimum wage in a large city is \$5,904 below the poverty line, and to reach the poverty line they would need an hourly wage of at least \$10;

"Because the minimum wage should provide people with an adequate standard of living;

"We demand that the Ontario government immediately increase the minimum wage to at least the poverty line—that means \$10 an hour—and index it to the cost of living."

I sign that petition.

1550

HIGHWAY SAFETY

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): We have a major campaign to try to get advance warning lights on the Thunder Bay Expressway.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Thunder Bay Expressway has been the scene of serious accidents in recent years; and

"Whereas as a result of strong lobbying by the community, including the OPP and Thunder Bay city council, a permanent advance warning light has been installed at Balsam Street; and

"Whereas since the installation of this warning light there has been a major improvement to the safety of that intersection; and

"Whereas to further increase safety on the expressway, more warning lights are needed farther down the system; and

"Whereas the chief of the Thunder Bay city police and nine municipalities fully support the extension of advance warning lights across the entire Thunder Bay Expressway system;

"Therefore, we the undersigned, in the interest of driving safety, petition the Premier of Ontario, the Minister of Transportation and the government of Ontario to immediately support the installation of a full set of advance warning lights across the entire route of the Thunder Bay Expressway."

I happily sign this. I'm very happy to pass it off to Mario Nucci, our new page from Thunder Bay. He comes from a great family in Thunder Bay. He spoke brilliantly at his grandparents' 50th wedding anniversary. Welcome, Mario. It's good to have you here.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): It's Shirley Crispin day. She was out signing more petitions over the last while, this time I'd say about 3,000 to 4,000 signatures. This is a different petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows.

"Because social assistance rates were slashed at 21.6% in 1995; and with the increases to the cost of living that cut is worth about 34.4% today; and

"Because current social assistance rates do not allow recipients to meet their cost of living; and

"Because the people of Ontario deserve an adequate standard of living and are guaranteed such by the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; and

"Because the jury at the inquest into the death of Kimberly Rogers recommended that the social assistance rates be reviewed so that they reflect actual costs of living;

"We demand that the Ontario government immediately increase the shelter portion of Ontario Works and Ontario disability support program benefits to the aver-

age Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp rent levels and index social assistance to the cost of living.”

I sign that petition.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

2003 ONTARIO BUDGET

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 22, 2003, on the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): It's a pleasure to rise today to speak to the budget that has finally been tabled, the budget bill. Before I start into the actual budget bill, I want to reiterate one more time that I still find it disheartening to know that the motion that said the budget should be read in the Legislature first was defeated by the Conservative members. I say that because, in my understanding that the people's money and how it is spent is first presented to the representatives of the people, it is still my opinion that it is the foundation for why we are here and the foundation of integrity in public spending. That is the scrutiny this House provides as a way to ensure that those dollars are being allocated as prioritized and in ways that are certainly to benefit the people of Ontario. I suggest that the budget is all about trust. Our budget is probably the most important document that is tabled here in the House because it deals with how the people's money is being spent.

Last year I was going through the budget books, and I noted that the revenue that came in from corporate tax went down significantly from 2000-01 to 2001-02. I asked, “Well, how did it go down from \$9.2 billion to \$6.6 billion?” It was interesting to note that in the Provincial Auditor's report, he stated that there are billions of dollars of uncollected corporate taxes and that they have been written off the books because they weren't collected and no one went after them.

I looked at the other revenues, and the revenues from everything else have actually gone up, except for corporate taxes. Again, that disturbs me, because this is about trust and good management. It isn't just about promises, self-congratulatory advertisement and, if you want, gimmicks like holding the budget speech outside of this House. I believe that maybe sometimes it's an attempt to try to fool the public, and I don't believe this House is a place where that should happen. We should hold this place to a higher standard. Unfortunately, in their intent to portray themselves as good managers, the government will say and do a lot of things that are not facts.

It is that ability to trust—it is about trust. How is it possible to trust a group which has done the unthinkable, to actually move out of a place that's going to provide scrutiny on how they spend the people's money—and what have they done? They take it to a place where they

have invited guests. How do you trust a group which actually acts in that fashion? They can say whatever they want, but they act totally differently.

The day before they presented the budget, they took \$36 billion and spent it with a special warrant or gave themselves the authority to spend it. How does one trust anyone who acts in that fashion and who does those things? I think it's very difficult to trust.

We talk about the budget, and in the budget we note that since 1995, the debt has increased from \$90 billion to \$112 billion. This has increased at a time when we've had unprecedented economic growth. So the question is, how do you trust this kind of fiscal management, when in fact in good times there should be a paying down of the debt? We should be able to meet our obligations instead of eroding our education system. As the Rozanski report said, we've cut \$2 billion out of our education system and yet we've had unprecedented economic growth. It doesn't make sense. I have to say again that it's all about trust.

Create chaos in the schools: you create chaos in the schools by not understanding that the people who deliver education are supposed to be on our side, on the children's side, and they are. You have a government that consistently wants to pick a fight with the educators. They don't deal with the problem. They find an excuse to add something else into solving the problem, just to kind of dig it in. It's unfortunate, because it doesn't do our education system any good. Someone tell me how we are better able to manage the education system by fighting with the teachers. How do we better manage the education system by suggesting that teachers have to be mandated to do extracurricular activities which they themselves are volunteering for? It shows a lack of respect.

When you talk about trust and the budget in the same vein—because to me, it is about trust.

I also have a report from the TD Bank Financial Group, and it talks about how it's really questionable whether or not this budget is actually balanced. I certainly understand why they didn't want to bring this budget to the Legislature because of this. They have to sell \$2 billion worth of assets in order to balance the budget. They will not tell us what they're going to sell.

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I'm going to read from the document TD Economics. It was released March 27, as a matter of fact. It talks about how in 2002-03, the federal transfers fill the hole in that budget. You know those federal transfers that they were screaming about needing for health care? Do you know what the document says? Again, these are the top economists from the TD Bank. They say:

“The inclusion of additional substantial revenues from asset sales, or as the government refers to as ‘sales and rentals’ put the government in a quandary last year. In its 2002 budget, the Ontario government had booked \$1.8 billion in net proceeds from the planned commercialization of assets. And, although it was not identified per se, Hydro One, the transmission arm of the province's

utility system, was a likely candidate.... Thus, the government's announcement in January 2003 that it would not go ahead with the planned sale left a sizable hole in the books. Fortunately for the government, however, help came in the way of a significant injection of federal transfers—notably an additional \$1 billion resulting from the February 2003 Accord on Health Renewal and a \$500-million upward revision as a result of an adjustment to a prior year.”

I didn't say this. This comes from TD Bank economists. They are independent. They normally love the whole notion of tax cuts, but they also scrutinize these numbers with a certain degree of objectivity.

They talk here about big revenues to pay for big spending: “In order to finance the 7.1% surge in total spending in fiscal 2003-04—the largest one-year advance in a decade”—could there possibly be an election looming?—“the government is banking on a formidable 7.8% jump in revenues.” I think they're asking for a magic wand.

What I want to state is that this budget is about trust. I, from all the evidence that's before me, do not trust the figures. This budget also had talked about—and we have another bill that's going to be coming up—seniors being rebated on the education portion of their property taxes. When you talk about a society who believes that it's everyone's responsibility to educate the young, what do we have? We have a group of people who are trying to buy votes. That's what this is about. We will have 30-year-olds who will say, “Do you know what? I don't think I should have to pay taxes for hip replacements. I don't have to pay taxes for a service I don't require.” What do we have? We have a government that is trying to use not a policy that's going to make this province better, but a policy that's going to buy votes. That's what I certainly do not trust about how all of this is being projected.

Standard and Poor's, the Dominion Bond Rating Service and the chief economist for TD Bank all say that this budget is not balanced. I certainly do not trust the fact that the numbers don't add up. These are the same people who dropped the revenues from corporation tax from 2000-01 by almost \$2.5 billion, a lot of which is because corporate taxes were not collected.

I want to go on about responsible, trustworthy projections. The Ontario Liberals did something that is unprecedented. We took all of our figures, we took all the specific costing of all of our policies and we handed it independently to three different people—two economists and a forensic auditor—to scrutinize, and they signed off on it. I have to tell you that they took a great deal of time going through this, because we are in an era where fiscal responsibility is important. We have to balance the books—we know that—not create faux budgets and then spend millions of taxpayers' dollars telling the public what a wonderful job you're doing, using their own money to tell them you're doing a great job.

I want to go on about trust and responsible policy-making and not this nonsense of trying to portray some-

thing for something else or to say something and do something differently.

Tim Reid is the former president of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce and a senior venture capital adviser, and this is what he said: “As president of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce I assessed in detail the credibility of nine federal budgets, some Liberal and some PC. In my opinion, Mr McGuinty's fiscal plan is balanced, prudent and responsible. His numbers add up. In fact, I have never seen a detailed fiscal plan so meticulously prepared for a transition to government. The business community can have confidence that Mr McGuinty is well prepared to be Premier.” That is what he has said, and he signed off on it.

Jack Marmer, a forensic accountant, a chartered accountant, a CGA and a CFE, said: “I conducted a detailed, line-by-line review with your staff. To do this I spent about 70 hours. I agree both with their methodology and the costs determined as a result of the application of that methodology ... For fiscal 2006-07, the total incremental cost will be about \$5.9 billion.”

David Hall is with Vista Economics and is the former senior economist for the Bank of Montreal. He said, “... in my professional opinion, your fiscal plan produces at least balanced budgets and a prudent reserve every year.” That's what he says.

Warren Jestin is a senior vice-president and chief economist at Scotiabank. What does he say? He says, “After examining the program details, I believe that it is a workable plan for our province ... your commitment to balancing the budget is both reassuring and an essential ingredient in successful long-term fiscal planning.”

That is about trust. You have independent people evaluate your numbers. You don't know what they're going to come up with because they are not partisan. They are there to do their job as professionals.

Have the Conservatives done this? No. In fact, the independent authorities say that you haven't balanced your books. That's what they say.

We have five—

Hon Ernie Hardeman (Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Just for clarification, I hear the member opposite speaking about the figures in the plan she's referring to. The plan I've read that was presented didn't have any figures in it. I wonder if she could share those with us—

Ms Di Cocco: That's not a point of order, Speaker.

Hon Mr Hardeman: —so I could follow her conversation more accurately.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Prue): The Speaker is aware that is not a point of order. This is a budget debate and there is a very wide latitude, and there has been a very wide latitude throughout this debate. We will continue to hear the member.

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Ms Di Cocco: I believe I am speaking about the budget.

What I would like to say about trust is that we have gotten a tremendous amount of support because our fiscal

accounting is about good management. The province has been mismanaged because there is a one-sided approach. The one-sided approach is that we have not invested appropriately in our health care. We don't have enough full-time nurses, for instance. So how does that help our system? It doesn't, because in the end we don't have the capacity to deal with emergencies, not to the extent that we would have had with a good base. I know what the nurses on the front lines are saying, and I don't think we can reiterate it in this House.

It's very important that the government understands it has a responsibility to be accurate, a responsibility to not say one thing and do another. That has been consistent with this government: they do not manage the affairs of this province prudently. We saw how they managed the whole notion of our environment, and Walkerton was a result. They fired five scientists in this province in 2001, one of whom was working on the test for West Nile virus. They fired him. Why? Because they said, "We don't want to spend money on someone standing around waiting for bugs to show up." It's a nearsighted approach to governing.

I believe the budget the Conservatives have brought forward—their phony, made-in-a-car-part-plant budget—is running a deficit. We're spending \$5 million a day in this province on extra interest on the debt that this government has put on the shoulders of our future generations.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments. The Chair recognizes the member for Timmins-James Bay.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. My congratulations on the promotion you got this afternoon.

It's rather unfortunate that I find in this particular debate that the members on the opposite side—in other words, on the government benches—weren't really paying attention to what the member from the Liberal caucus was saying. I think it's rather unfortunate, because one of the most fundamental things that we do in this Legislature, as far as our responsibilities as members, is how we collect and spend money from the taxpayers of the province of Ontario. That is the essence of how everything else works within this Parliament. If we're going to spend money on health care, education, roads or whatever it might be, we have to demonstrate in the end that we have money coming in, how we are going to account for it and how it's being expended on the way out.

As I was listening to the debate, some of the suggestions she was making I can agree with, some of them I can't, but I thought it was an interesting proposal that she put forward nonetheless. What we have in this place more and more is a sense from the government benches that they find comments made by members of the opposition, and some of their own backbenchers, irrelevant. I think that's rather unfortunate. It demonstrates the degree to which we need to change the way this Parliament operates. We really need to sit back after the next election—I'm hoping it will be a minority Parliament. I think that's probably the only time we're really going to be

able to change the rules in this House, so that members on all sides of the House have a more important role to play when it comes to government policy. I think government backbenchers—and everybody here in the House today on the government side, except for one, is a backbencher—basically have very little to say about how the government spends its money.

I can't believe for a second that all the Conservative members thought going to Magna International with the budget was a good thing. Nonetheless, what you've got is a government that seems to sit back and not take this kind of debate seriously. I think that's rather unfortunate, and I look forward to the day we have an election, we turf these guys out and we change the rules.

Hon Mr Hardeman: I want to say a few words. Not to disturb the gathering or the debate here this afternoon, I was really somewhat at a loss when I heard the member opposite speaking about the budget. I realize the rules of the House say that a budget debate can be far-reaching and cover a lot of areas, but I didn't realize that it meant you could spend the whole time talking about a hypothetical platform that one would like to take to the people at some point in our future, as opposed to talking about that which is happening here in the Legislature today. I was kind of hoping that we would hear her discussion. As the member opposite in his two-minute comment mentioned, we could take from that some advice and some assistance in what was right and what was wrong about the process, because I do think it takes away from the purpose of being here if we do not talk about and discuss the issues at hand.

In fairness, I did stand up to ask the question because I heard the member opposite continually talking about how they had taken their plan and sent it to auditors and to economists and that everyone they paid gave glowing reports on the quality of the figures. But the report I saw didn't have any figures in it, so I wondered what was being audited that got such a glowing report. I suppose if you don't have figures in it, it's not very difficult to get people to say, "If you just tell me what you want in the end, then I will agree that how you're proposing to get there will get you there." I really do question the authenticity of saying that we have three auditors willing to say it is a quality report when there are no figures in it to address those very numbers.

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): I rise to commend the member from Sarnia for her very good presentation on the budget. The member for Sarnia, since she was elected in 1999, has been the advocate for public accountability. I want to thank her, because I think she's made a difference on both sides of the House with regard to this. Today was a perfect example. She talked about the importance of being accountable to the people who elect you, she talked about the importance of openness, and she talked about the importance of being credible in your approach to democracy. In all of those she challenged this government with regard to their last budget as making a mistake. I think there's a consensus across the province now that the Harris-Eves Tories were wrong in

the way they presented the budget. I know they'd like to apologize to the people of Ontario for doing that, and we the people of Ontario would like them to be accountable to that. I think that's what she said.

She also outlined that these guys aren't the fiscal managers that they would like the people of Ontario to believe. Listen, they were very, very critical of the 1990-95 NDP, who added billions to our provincial debt. But these guys on the other side of the House, the Harris-Eves Tories, these fiscal managers, have added \$21 billion of debt to our provincial debt. I don't think sound fiscal managers do that.

I thank the member for Sarnia for being so honest in her presentation.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It's my pleasure to respond to the member for Sarnia-Lambton and respectfully acknowledge that it's important to listen to the full debate. This is about, as you know, the budget. I'm proud to be a member of the Eves government where Janet Ecker, the Minister of Finance, has presented a balanced budget. There will be those that disagree, as they did with every single tax policy and tax measure we've had; they voted against every single one of them. They really, in fact, voted against the over one million new jobs. So there isn't much confidence. I caution the people of Ontario to always keep in mind that the Liberal record, over many, many years, has consistently been one of taxing and spending. I do have a lot of confidence in Howard Hampton that at least we know where he's coming from.

In this budget debate, yes, they can cry and whine with respect to, where is that \$2 billion? That's the number. They have to remember that there is a billion-dollar emergency fund that the government has never used in its four or five years. Each year at the end of the fiscal year, they rolled that into an unprecedented \$5 billion paid off against the accumulated debt.

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With all due respect, we can't afford the Liberals. Probably one of the best articles, just flipping through—there's a good article from the Toronto Star. It says, "Promises May Haunt Liberals." They go on to say that some of their ideas might just backfire. In fact, it reminds me of the days when Chrétien and Sheila Copps said to me that they were going to cancel the GST and they're going to cancel the airport deal.

I think they'll live to regret—one policy area specifically in their platform is the 407 announcement, that they're going to freeze or roll back the tolls. I completely construed that as that I think they're going to find another legal battle, just like the one where they had to pay off the helicopter contract in Ottawa.

So stick with the tried and true. We've balanced the budget five consecutive times. There's more to be done, and we're the government, under Ernie Eves, to do that.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Sarnia-Lambton now has two minutes to sum up.

Ms Di Cocco: It's unfortunate that here we have people who say their books are balanced, but they're not

balanced. This is not a balanced budget. That's according to Standard and Poor's, the Dominion Bond Rating Service and the chief economist from TD Bank. They all say this budget is not balanced. That's a fact.

We would love to give tax cuts. I would love to be able to give tax cuts. But you know what you have to do in government? Not bribe the voters. You have to be responsible. This is what's important: to be responsible with the dollars that people have entrusted to the government. This is a government that took \$36 billion, and a couple of people in cabinet went and signed off on \$36 billion even before coming into the Legislature. They did this, and do you know what Premier Eves says? "We didn't want to do this. Somebody made us do it."

Then they took the budget speech outside of the House. The people's money was being spent and promoted to 300 people who were invited guests. The people's representatives were rendered irrelevant in this House.

I would suggest that the actions show the budget cannot be trusted. In my opinion, it is about fooling the public and buying votes. It's certainly not about accountability and it's certainly not about transparency, because this government does not understand how to act in that fashion.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Bisson: I rise today, happy to finally be able to debate the budget in this Legislature. Can you imagine? Earlier this spring the government decided—I would have never believed it in my wildest dreams—that they weren't going to do a budget in the House but were going to take the budget and do it at Magna International and were going to trot out their so-called budget as a public relations exercise. I don't need to remind you, Speaker—we've had an ensuing debate in this House for two weeks—about why the government was in contempt to do so. Here we find ourselves, at this late hour of the spring session, finally starting to debate the budget.

I'm going to repeat what I said at the very beginning. One of the most fundamental things we do in this place is to decide program expenditure and taxation. That's the most basic thing we do. Without taxation there are no schools, no health care system, no roads, no basic programs that people rely on every day. How we organize those programs, quite frankly, as the member pointed out earlier, is one of the basic things we do here. To decide how we're going to spend the taxpayers' dollars and how we're going to organize those services, to make decisions about what it is we want to do as public programs and then move to how we're going to do that is the basic thing.

It's unfortunate that the government doesn't utilize their responsibility more wisely when it comes to how they use this House and our committee process. This government is an ideological government. They're ideologues. Yes, we're all guilty to an extent—New Democrats and Conservatives—of being married to ideology, but where I have problems with this government is that they take it to an extreme. They seem to think there is

only one way and that's their way, and no matter what anybody says, how they say it or how much sense it makes, they're not going to listen.

When they moved to deregulate and open the Ontario hydro market last year, they said, "Rates are going to go down and everything's going to be ginger-peachy, just you wait. The private sector does it best." The New Democratic caucus and our leader, Howard Hampton, said, "Just you wait. You open the market, you do what they've done in California, Alberta and other jurisdictions, and you'll see rates go through the roof." And that's exactly what happened.

The government was not prepared to listen to the wisdom of this assembly, was not prepared to take into context the comments that are made in this place and how our committees operate in order to make a better decision. Instead the government has spent the last year trying to put the genie back into the bottle when it comes to hydro.

I raised this afternoon, in question period, but two of some hundred letters and hydro bills I got from across my riding. The government says, "Oh, well, we messed it up when we opened the market. Sorry, so sad. We'll try to fix it. We're going to put a rate cap in place." So on the one hand they say they're going to fix it by putting in place a rate cap but what they don't say is that we're all having to pay extra things like the cost of delivery of electricity, debt retirement charges and everything else so that your hydro rates are through the roof.

I raised the case of Mr Joe Bergeron, comparing his hydro bill this year to what it was last year. Mind you, Mr Bergeron's house in Kapuskasing is electrically heated. Last January, he paid \$552 for both his heat and hydro, because he is electrically heated in the town of Kapuskasing, from Northern Ontario Wires. This year, when he got his bill in January, his energy costs were virtually the same, but when you add up all the other little service charges—and I've got to read some of these: electricity charges; standard supply service tax; distribution per kilowatt hour charge, residential; debt retirement charge; transmission network services; transmission connection services; service rental charge—he went from \$552 last year to 968 bucks.

You've tried to put the genie back in the bottle but it hasn't worked. Why don't you guys just get it? Every now and then you've got to listen to people who may know something about what it is you're trying to do.

I just want to raise the other example. This one will knock your socks off. I've got a small business in my riding—actually quite a large business. He owns a small grocery store in the city of Timmins. He comes to see me and he says, "Gilles, I'm having one heck of a problem. December last year"—in other words, December before the market opened—"I paid \$1,600 for electricity for my store: for my coolers and the lights etc. In January 2002, I paid \$1,677, and in February 2002, \$1,500." Then what ends up happening is that the government messes up the market opening and we end up having to put in place a cap. You would think at least his hydro bill would be

equal to what it was last year. Well, 1,500 bucks last year for the same period; \$3,816 this year.

Don't you guys get it? You messed up, because you wouldn't listen. People stood in this assembly, as they did in committee, as they did across this province, and said, "Ernie Eves, don't open the market. It's not going to work. It hasn't worked anywhere else; why should it work here?" But, no, this government doesn't want to listen.

It's a running theme we see with this government that quite frankly I think scares a lot of us in Ontario. I think by and large it's true that Ontarians tend to be a little bit small-c conservative by nature and they want to know that their government institutions are working for them. They want to know that the government has, yes, some ideological beliefs that things should be done in a certain way, but at the end of the day they take into account what's been told and they try to rule in a way that is fair for the people the government affects. Well, clearly in the case of hydro, it hasn't been fair.

I note in the gallery—on another issue—we have some of the teachers from the English Catholic board of Toronto here. We see the same pattern in what the government is trying to do with teachers in the province as they did with hydro.

Let's take a look at what they've done in education. In 1995 they appointed John Snobelen as Minister of Education. The guy goes out to a meeting of bureaucrats and says, "I will create a crisis in education as the backdrop to make the changes we want to make in the education system." He should have been fired out of cabinet, because that was a government plan. The last time I checked, under the convention of cabinet, if you leak cabinet solidarity you get fired. And this guy said it on videotape.

1630

Every fight since 1995 has not been to better a system of education, it's been about fighting teachers. Why? Because it's good politics for the Tories. I think Ontarians are getting sick and tired. You turn around and make the type of changes that you did in education by vilifying teachers—the one that really took the cake for me was the recertification of teachers. Look at Hansard. As a New Democrat I said that if you want to come into this House and talk about recertifying electricians, doctors, teachers, professions and trades, let's get into that debate. Maybe there's a logical reason we have to do it. Maybe I missed something that you're trying to say but I'm at least prepared to listen. But when you come into this House and you say to me, "We the Conservative government want to recertify teachers and no one else," I say to myself, "What's that all about?" It's politics, pure and simple. The government wants to vilify the teachers on the backs of our kids and use it as an issue to be able to bump themselves up in the polls. The government goes on. They got lucky and they came back for a second mandate.

Now they find themselves in sort of the twilight hours of their reign, and let's hope twilight becomes darkness

very soon and they're gone. But now they say to themselves, "We're 28% in the polls. What are we going to do?" The whiz kids in the back office with Ernie Eves say, "We've got it. Let's fight teachers again. It's a wonderful thing. Every time we fight teachers we supposedly go up in the polls." I remind you, it was about two years ago when all the teachers were on a work-to-rule campaign and the government at that time took the position that if they fought the teachers, the public would galvanize on the side of the government against the teachers and it would be a good thing politically. Instead, people by the hundreds went to the picket lines to support the teachers. They said, "We don't understand the details of what's going on, but all we know is that you're picking on them. Stop it." So the government was made to back down and we ended up settling that issue a couple of years ago.

That's much the same thing as we see here in Toronto. The government turns around and says, "We've got a solution. Let's see if we understand this: the school board and the Catholic teachers are in negotiations." That shouldn't be a foreign concept. The last time I checked, the most basic thing we do in a democracy is negotiate by way of a collective agreement. Pretty simple. If we value democracy, we should allow that process to happen. The employer says, for whatever reason, "I think they're wrong." The teachers said, "No, we're not prepared to meet your demands." The teachers have a position, the employer has another position and it becomes a bit of a deadlock. The response by the employer is, "We'll lock them out because we know our friend Ernie Eves is going to order them back. Why should we negotiate?" Why would I negotiate if I were a board member? If I sat on the board and I knew that my employees, being teachers and others, could be ordered back to work, I wouldn't go to the table to negotiate anything. I'd know that the government's going to do it for me. They're going to legislate them back and I can do what I want.

So this government says, "We've got a solution." They're going to fix the city of Toronto issue with Catholic teachers by banning all teachers across the province of Ontario from the right to what we call in French "*une grève du zèle*." In English we call it a work-to-rule campaign. "And we're going to make mandatory those activities that teachers already do on a voluntary basis." What's this all about? Why? What's the point? Don't you get it? All you're doing is coming in and yet again trying to kick teachers between the eyes. It isn't going to work. If you think this is a great big election ploy, at the end of the day—and I don't care what the short poll numbers told you that you saw in the National Post the other day when 500 of your friends were called—the reality is, most people understand that what you're doing—

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: Yes. Thank you for listening, much appreciated. Any time you want to tune back in, Marilyn, it would be a wonderful thing. I love it when you pay attention. This is good. Maybe we'll finally get through

to some of you that all you're doing is playing politics with kids.

What's really reprehensible in my view is when the government House leader, the Minister of Education, the Minister of Labour and the Premier come in here and try to blame the opposition for the problem. My God, what's the matter with you? The first step to fixing a problem is admitting that you might have one. That's the most basic thing. But you guys won't even admit that you've created this problem. So we, through our caucus, through Peter Kormos and Rosario Marchese, have put forward a proposal in regard to being able to refer the matter off to binding arbitration. The government says, "No, we don't want to send it off to binding arbitration," as we have with all other issues.

I remember the TTC strike. I remember the city of Toronto last year, when the public works people were on strike. I remember various strikes across the province where that has had to be done because we were at a point of being in jeopardy. When it comes to losing the school year, we refer the matter off to binding arbitration. We pick from both sides those that you're able to live with as arbitrators, and you refer the matter off. That way the employees and the employer may not be totally satisfied, but at least they feel they got a fair hearing. This government's response is, "No, we're not going to do that. We're going to introduce legislation, not to deal with the Catholic teachers in Ontario. We're going to deal with all of them." Oh, my God. What's the matter with you guys? Don't you get it? You're doing nothing more than picking on people.

I come back to my first point; that is, you guys just don't listen. I think, at the end of the day, that arrogance—what I believe is arrogance at this point—is going to be your downfall.

As I travelled across my riding, and as I travelled across other parts of the province—I was in Mr Gilchrist's riding about two weeks ago—I was astounded. I was surprised. I figured Mr Gilchrist, being one of the more outspoken members of the government from the backbench, would be in fairly good shape. It was hatred. I couldn't believe it. I went out there to do a little bit of door-knocking with one of our candidates. At almost every door I went to, what people were mad at was the arrogance, the arrogance of this government vis-a-vis how they deal with these issues.

People don't understand the details of what market opening means with hydro, and what deregulation means. All they know is that their hydro bill went up. At the end of the day, when the government was asked to fix it, they dithered, they did nothing. When they said they fixed it, they really didn't.

They don't understand the complexities of what happens at the bargaining table at the Catholic school board here in Toronto. I would argue that some teachers may not even understand. I just say that in fun, because I've been on both sides of that bargaining table. I understand well. Sometimes management doesn't understand.

But all the people know from a gut perspective, from a gut feeling, that what the government is doing is playing politics. All I'm saying to you, by way of this debate, is that we should spend more time trying to listen to each other in this House and in committee so that we're able to do what we're charged to do by our electors, which is to come here and represent the people of our riding, and in general the people of Ontario, in as fair a way as possible. If you can learn anything at all from members of the opposition, it's to at least have a little bit of humility in saying, "Well, maybe they've got an idea over there."

I've been on a committee just recently where Mr Gill brought a bill in. Originally, I think he thought I was being partisan when I was trying to point out that they were gutting his bill. You have to understand that some of us have been around here for a while and have a sense of what goes on, or that some new members who come in here may have expertise in a particular area. It seems to me that if I'm dealing with issues of pensions, I may want to talk to a man like Mr Robert Sampson, who's a Conservative, and who has dealt with that matter for a number of years. He may know more about it than I do, and I'm a member of the opposition. We all bring some kinds of skills into this House so that we can all build on what it is that we do best.

I say that there are a couple of things that have to happen. At the very, very least, I am praying that there's a minority Parliament. I don't want my party to get a majority. I don't want the Liberals to get a majority. I don't want you guys to get a majority. We need a minority Parliament in this place really bad.

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: Why? Mr Gill, you just don't get it. Let me say this slowly: the reason you need a minority government is so that people like you on the backbench can actually have some say. At the end of the day, what we do know is that the rules in this House have gone really badly. The government can now decide to bring a bill into the House on Monday, and by Thursday it can be passed. We've had examples of flawed legislation coming into this House and having to be brought back sometime later to be fixed—being flawed, having to bring it back again because the government just didn't take the time to do it right in the first place. That's the least.

The second thing that I think we need to do, and it's something we have on our platform, is to change the way we elect people. We need to change the way this House operates. We've got to do what they do in Australia, New Zealand and pretty well all other parliamentary democracies—except for Great Britain, India and Canada—and that is move to a system of proportional representation, so that, at the very least, when a government gets elected, if it doesn't have 50% of the vote, it doesn't have 50% of the members. Imagine what would have happened in 1995 if Mike Harris had won the government with 44%. He never would have had a majority. He would not have been able to build a super-mega-city of Toronto. He

couldn't have picked on teachers as he has for the last eight years unless somebody in the opposition sided with him. I can't speak for other members, but I know where I would have been on those issues.

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Is that a bad thing? Let me put this to the test. If 103 members who are duly elected by the people of their ridings don't feel, as a majority, 50%, that there needs to be something happening in this Legislature one way or another, why should we? If it doesn't pass the test here, it's certainly not going to pass the test out there.

Our problem is that in our current system, members could be elected to the Legislature with as little as 32% of the vote if they are in one of those types of ridings. There are very few of us who get elected at over 50%. I've been quite fortunate; I've had two elections where I've been elected at over 50%, but that's not the norm. Most people in this place are elected at below 50%.

So I propose, as a New Democrat, a very simple concept: let's look at what they do elsewhere. Let's look at what they do in New Zealand, where you have a party election just as you have right now. At the end of the day, you say everybody is elected first-past-the-post. When the election is over, we say, quite simply, "The Conservatives got 44% of the vote; their number of elected members equals 44% of the seats, and the rest of us are adjusted accordingly so that they don't have a majority." If they get 52% of the vote, well, by God, they deserve the majority that they got, but it would be the very odd time that it happens. I don't believe that, under our current system of government, democracy is served well.

I just want to close, in the last two minutes I have, on another issue that I think the government needs to listen to, and that's the issue of pensions. My leader, Howard Hampton, has brought into the House, as I have, a number of examples where people who have worked hard all their lives are seeing their pensions eroded because of bad investment policies on the part of the pension boards. We're talking about defined pension plans; we're talking about pensions like you have. The government doesn't recognize that it has a role and a responsibility as the regulator of pensions in Ontario. I have a case in my riding where the people at Royal Oak had their pensions after retirement devalued by 25%. What do you do when you're a senior and you rely on that money to be able to make ends meet and your pension is devalued by 25%?

What about the examples of the people we brought in here who lost 50%, the workers in the food industry around the Chatham area, where they have lost 50% of their pensions because of bad investment practices? You know what? Believe this: there are no rules to stop this. Guess what the pension administrator or the pension investment person invested in? Derivatives. I wouldn't touch derivatives with a 10-foot pole and I don't know a heck of a lot about investment. I just know derivatives are bad. Most people can't figure out how to play those things. This guy, who manages the pension plan for the Teamsters and for the Associated Employers in the food

industry, invested in derivatives and lost over 50% of the value of the pension fund. As a result, these people's pension plan is defunct and they're going to have to wind it down and cash them out.

If you could do but one thing, I ask you, please try to listen. As my friend Peter Kormos says, "Écoutez." That's French for "listen," if you didn't catch it in the other language. You need to listen not only to people in this Legislature but to people in this province about how to run good government. My prediction at this point is, if you're down 28% in the polls, there's a reason for it, and that is that people are getting pretty tired of the arrogance of this government not wanting to listen to people when they bring forward good suggestions.

I say again, you have an opportunity to do the right thing. Back off on the teachers' thing. I think that's really dumb. Try to fix the pension issue for the seniors who are finding their pensions being devalued, and a host of other issues that you can really turn your attention to, working in cooperation with all the members of the House to make Ontario the truly great province it should be.

The Acting Speaker: Before I call for questions and comments, I wondered if the members opposite—it was a long speech but I think I heard you almost as often as I heard him. He did not seem to be bothered, but maybe a little more decorum.

Hon Tina R. Molinari (Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): It's a pleasure to stand up and make a few comments based on some of what I've heard in the debate. I have to mention the importance of having students in school and having them learn and be educated by their teachers, and the teachers doing the full responsibilities that they need to do.

The bill that's being presented on this issue has to do with things that are essential for teachers to perform their duties, and that is to fulfill their obligation and their commitment to do report cards, to meet with parents—things that are a necessity for the education of the students.

I was fortunate enough to be a trustee with the York Catholic school board and a chair of that board for a number of years, and I saw what happened in the school system when the teachers are on work-to-rule. We believe in the integrity of the profession, we believe in the integrity of what goes on in the classroom, and it's essential and important that all of those duties take place within the school setting.

I also want to comment on a few things with respect to seniors. The member opposite talked about help for seniors. This government has done more than any other government to help seniors. As a matter of fact, the education tax credit seniors will be getting is also something we feel very proud of and very strongly about. I encourage the members opposite to also support this initiative, because it does help seniors when they're on a fixed income. These are individuals who have contributed greatly to the province of Ontario and contributed greatly in their taxation. This is just one way of recognizing the fact that they've made all of these contri-

butions and now it's time for us to recognize that they've been paying education taxes and they need to have a break in this area.

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): I want to commend the member from Timmins-James Bay on his presentation today. I think what he tried to point out in his presentation is this misconception the public has that, as my colleague Gerry Phillips has said, this government is a so-called good fiscal manager. How can somebody who claims to be responsible deal in the way they have with the finances of this province? The public needs to realize that the debt has increased substantially since this government has taken office. Since this government took office in 1995, the debt has gone from \$90 billion to over \$110 billion, a \$21-billion debt increase.

They have yet to answer the question, with this so-called auto parts plant budget that's been presented, about the \$2-billion hole in this budget, a hole they say they're going to fill by asset sales.

Interjection: A doughnut budget.

Mr Peters: It is a doughnut budget.

When will the government come clean to the citizens of Ontario and clearly state where this \$2-billion hole is going to come from? What assets are you going to put on the table to balance your budget? I think it's very irresponsible. I heard the member speak earlier about five balanced budgets in a row, but it's irresponsible for an elected government to be using asset sales to balance a budget. If you're going to do something that is prudent financially, if you are selling assets in this province, those assets should be put into reserve funds. We saw it in 1999. You sold Highway 407 to balance the budget. We've seen POSO, the Province of Ontario Savings Office, sold. You can't continue to sell assets. This is a government that is mortgaging the future with a \$21-billion debt increase.

Mr Bartolucci: I don't always agree with the member from Timmins-James Bay but we do respect each other. I respect his passion, there's absolutely no question. But he was absolutely right today when he talked about the government's failure toward the teaching profession and the harm this government has done to children because it has demeaned teachers. They've demeaned school boards. They've demeaned the educational process.

The partners of education are very important. Each has a specific but very important role to play, whether it be the school board trustees, the students, the parents or the teachers. Each is responsible, in a way, to forge the positive environment which will maximize education for the child.

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Government has a very important role to play as well. They are the ones who are supposed to encourage, mentor and provide the opportunity for each partner in education to manifest its part fully. This government has robbed that process since 1995. You have done harm to education that will only come to real fruition in the years to come. You will be out of power. Someone else will be

in power. We will be trying to fix the problems that you created because of the ideology you started in 1995.

It's not something to be proud of. It's not something that you will want as a testament to your government. I say that you have an opportunity now by calling an election and righting the problems.

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): I would like to remind the members of the House, especially those on the government side, of the main reason why we are in this particular place. If it's not us who speak on behalf of the people who have sent every member of this House here, including the Premier, then who is it? We have a government that since 1995—we've been repeating this, day in and day out, in this House—has been after the weakest people in our community: the young and the seniors. Why? Because this was the way they wanted to do it. That was their mentality. Education has been decimated. Health care has been decimated. That is why we are here.

Yesterday I had a chance to do some pre-election canvassing, and there was one core of people after another saying, "Why are you doing this?" I said, "Look, it's not us, it's the government." "Why don't they call an election?" I said, "Yes, an election is going to be coming." They said, "Well, good, because this time will be our time to tell the government where we stand on those issues that they have dealt with since 1995. We're not better off today than in 1990 or 1995, and it's because of this particular government."

It's a shame, because we have gone through some of the best economic years in our province, and on top of that, we have seen the harshest and deepest cuts to our most important institutions. I think it's time this government face the people and answer for the actions of the past eight years.

The Acting Speaker: The member from Timmins-James Bay now has two minutes to respond.

Mr Bisson: First of all, I want to thank all the members for their comments in regard to my presentation here today.

I just want to come back to the point again, because I think it needs to be repeated, and that is that we could best serve Ontarians, in my view, if members in this assembly were better able to work together. I don't pretend for one second that one political party or another has all of the answers. I think it's a combination of ideas put forward by one side of the House or the other in the best interests of the people of Ontario, and then we work out how to make it happen.

There have been examples of where we've done that. There have been a couple of examples where we've gone on committee, done some good work and brought forward some good recommendations. And it is partisan. Let's not kid ourselves, politics are partisan. I have my point of view, the Liberals have their point of view and the Tories have their point of view, but at the end, in a couple of examples in this Parliament, we managed to bring forward what I think were good, solid recom-

mendations about how to draft legislation. Who was the better for that? I think it was the people of Ontario.

What I really find discouraging for the people of Ontario in this House is the arrogance that the government brings to these debates. It's not an exercise of just sitting here and doing your House duty because the whip tells you to do so. As a matter of fact, I am the whip, and where are my people? But that's another story. I just say it's the fact of coming into this place and, together, listening to each other and what we have to say so we can then go back and make better policy decisions on how to best serve Ontarians.

I don't think we're serving anybody well by doing what we're doing with the Catholic teachers in Toronto. I think that's seen by most people in this province as being a highly partisan position for the government to take, for political gain, supposedly. At the end of the day, what are we doing? We're not serving the kids; we're serving a government's political agenda. I'd say we'd be better off working together, so that at the end of the day we do what we're meant to in this place, and that is to serve all Ontarians in a fair manner.

Hon Jerry J. Ouellette (Minister of Natural Resources): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd just like to take a moment to introduce three very special guests from the riding of Oshawa. We have Anne Wright, the chair of the board of directors for the Lakeridge Health Corp, and president Chuck Powers and Don Blight from the Oshawa General Hospital Foundation. We welcome you to Queen's Park.

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): This afternoon it's a pleasure for me to address the House to talk about how our government is continuing to fulfill its commitment to all Ontarians, including seniors.

This bill acknowledges the contributions seniors have made in the past and for what they continue to give their families and communities today. Ontario's success and prosperity is due in part to the contributions of the 1.5 million seniors who live in this great province of ours, and we intend to recognize all their contributions and hard work. Seniors have helped create an Ontario that's prosperous and proud. Our government recognizes and celebrates their achievements and the important role they play, and continue to play, in their communities to help build the great quality of life we enjoy in Ontario. Our programs and services for seniors reflect our respect for them and include a broad range of initiatives from health care to safety and security, and property tax cuts.

We are proud of our commitment to seniors and of setting our goals to the highest standard for assisting seniors and their families. I'm proud to say that my own parents, who live in Malton, fall into that category. They are quite pleased with the latest budget as well as the election document we just released the other day. I know you were quite impressed with it too, after you saw the substantial nature of the election document, *The Road Ahead*, 61 pages of it.

Interjections.

Mr Gill: I must have touched something there. They're quite upset about something. I welcome those remarks, by the way.

We want to ensure that our seniors have the support they need to live safely and independently with dignity. How do we achieve this? I must point out to the people at home that we do this by investing in the areas that would protect the health and well-being of seniors.

The 2003 Ontario budget—the budget speech, by the way, was held in my riding, the great riding of Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale, and there was great input from citizens, which has never happened before. They were able to ask questions. The media, including the ethnic media, were able to directly ask questions of the Premier as well as the Minister of Finance. I was quite pleased that this was an open process. In the 2003 Ontario budget, we introduced new initiatives that would help seniors to remain in their own homes and assist them with rising costs. Our 2003 budget proposes to provide new property tax relief for seniors through the Ontario home property tax relief for seniors program. If approved—and we're discussing it and hoping to approve it soon—this bill would have the residential education property tax on seniors' principal residences refunded through this new program. I was quite pleased to join the Premier at the announcement of the seniors property tax refund, with Olive Russell. I'm sure many people at home saw that. That was again in my great riding of Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale. So we've had quite a number of interactions and input from the people in my riding, as well as from across Ontario.

Going back to the budget document, as well as the platform, *The Road Ahead*, considerable consultations have been done with the people through direct contact, e-mail and all kinds of technical utilization of tools where people had great input. It started out in 2001 with STO, *Seizing Tomorrow's Opportunities*, the largest consultation we've had with Ontarians in terms of how they would like to see this province being run in the next five, 10, 15 years. It's because of their input that we have been able to substantially bring in a great election document which everybody's so excited about.

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If approved, education property tax relief would be available to both senior homeowners and senior tenants and would be implemented in two stages. In 2003, seniors who own or rent their homes would be eligible for a credit that would reimburse the portion of the residential education property tax they will pay on the principal residence for the period after July 1, 2003. That, on average, amounts to about \$450, I believe. I know seniors are quite excited to get money back. In fact, Olive Russell, when she was asked by one of the reporters if she feels she should be spending more money on education, said that in her 50 years she has paid enough in education and it's her time to get a tax break.

Starting in 2004, the relief would be based on the full year's residential education property tax paid. This new tax relief for seniors program would provide \$450 mil-

lion in net benefits for seniors. That's a substantial number. People thought it wasn't enough and perhaps more needs to be done. We'll continue to look at more tax cuts and more refunds of their own money.

A lot of times governments feel—and I know the NDP government, when they were in power between 1990 and 1995, especially felt it was their money and they kept spending and spending. In fact, they were producing at that time \$11.5 billion of deficit; if I can spell it out, \$1 billion is a thousand million. There was \$11.5 billion, which meant they were spending \$1 million per hour more than they were taking in.

Since we took office in 1995, it has taken us some time to turn the ship around, if you want to call it that—and this is an argument that the Liberals keep putting forward. I know they keep saying it and they intend to keep saying it in the next election as well. They're going to say, "Guess what? The PCs have increased the debt." They're going to keep saying it. They said that last time. The fact of the matter is, we have balanced the last five budgets. It has not been done since 1908. Yes, there is more debt than when we took office—

Mr Peters: Tell us where the \$2 billion is coming from.

The Acting Speaker: Order, please.

Mr Gill: The reason for that extra debt is, when we took office and there was an \$11.5-billion deficit every year, you can't just come in the first year and say, "OK, I'm going to wipe that." There's no magic. It took us a while to turn the ship around. Perhaps the first deficit might have been \$8 billion, then \$6 billion and whatever. In the meantime some of the debt went up, but it is in the last five years that we have balanced the budget. It's not been done since 1908. I'm quite happy that we are going to continue to do that. That's a promise to Ontario taxpayers. Not only did we balance the books, but we've also reduced the debt by \$5 billion. We did that ahead of time. We had said it was going to take us four years to pay back \$5 billion. We were able to do that in three years.

Again in *The Road Ahead* document, we have a promise to reduce another \$5 billion of the debt, which I think is very important to continue, first of all, balancing budgets as well as paying down the debt.

On an individual basis, the seniors property tax credit would mean an average annual net savings of \$475 for each of about 945,000 senior households. This new tax relief for seniors is an enhancement to Ontario's personal income tax system, which already provides a variety of tax credits that recognize—

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Could you get Conway to stop bothering the Hansard reporter, please?

The Acting Speaker: I don't think he is bothering her. At least I trust he is not. Thank you. Please proceed.

Mr Gill: This is so good that I better repeat what I had just finished saying, because people at home might have missed part of that. I'm sure that a lot of seniors are quite

interested. This new tax relief for seniors is an enhancement to Ontario's personal income tax system, which already provides a variety of tax credits that recognize that senior citizens have lower average incomes than the population as a whole. These include Ontario's age credit and the Ontario property and sales tax credit, which provide support to seniors and their families. Seniors have also benefited from Ontario's broad-based tax cuts to date.

The budget also announced new benefits that would help seniors and their family caregivers. We are proposing to enhance Ontario's current tax support for caregivers with improvements to the non-refundable credits supporting individuals with disabilities and family caregivers effective January 1, 2003. These enhancements would provide annual benefits of \$50 million to about 165,000 family caregivers and people with disabilities. This would mean an average saving of about \$300 each.

It is vital for seniors that the members of this Legislature pass this bill. I would certainly strongly recommend that everybody exercise their vote and pass this as quickly as we can. Its passage would demonstrate to them that all parties agree that their past contributions deserve recognition. It would also demonstrate that the members of the Legislature support seniors' rights to a safe and secure lifestyle.

The Ontario government believes strongly in making sure seniors have the best possible quality of life in safe and healthy communities. Our commitment to supporting seniors involves many ministries throughout the government. Through the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, our government has increased health care spending from \$17.6 billion in 1995 to invest \$27.6 billion this year.

I must point out that one of the largest hospitals in Canada, which is the largest community-based hospital, is going to be built in my great riding of Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale. It is going to be 608 beds with all the specialities in that hospital. After 30 years in the making, we're looking forward to having a new hospital, and I know the sod-turning is going to be done fairly soon.

This is an increase of \$10 billion in the health care system itself since we came to office. In 1998, our government committed to increasing its annual spending on long-term care by \$1.2 billion from 1998-99 to 2005-06. This investment plan includes approximately \$700 million to fund the construction and operating costs of 20,000 new long-term-care beds, the first new beds in over a decade.

The other day I was in committee, as I am several times, and I did not think I would hear what I heard from the third party, the NDP. They said we have too many long-term-care beds now. That's amazing. We had a great shortage; now they're saying too many. I don't think we can tune it to the finite numbers, saying, well, now we're matching the long-term care to the long-term needs, but I can assure you that great progress is being made. I was quite amazed and quite happy to hear the NDP say that we have too many long-term-care beds.

It also includes a \$55-million increase in annual spending on vital long-term-care community services such as visiting nurses and homemakers, Meals on Wheels and transportation services. Funding new long-term-care beds is only part of our plan to provide residents in all long-term-care facilities with additional nursing and personal care.

Again I'm quite pleased to say that in my great riding of Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale we have two long-term-care facilities being built, one in Malton and the other one in Bramalea right next to the hospital, right next to the wellness centre. I am quite pleased to be going to the opening of it fairly soon.

The Minister of Finance announced in the 2003 budget that our government will provide an additional \$100 million annually specifically for nursing and personal care. This is in addition to the \$100-million increase for nursing and personal care that the Honourable Dan Newman announced last August.

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Some examples of our recent investment in long-term-care facilities include the creation of 186 new and 184 redeveloped long-term-care beds at the F.J. Davey facility in Sault Ste Marie—I'm sure the member for Sault Ste Marie will be quite pleased and happy to hear that—160 new long-term-care beds in the town of Kingsville and 200 new long-term-care beds at the Yee Hong Centre in Markham.

By the way, this Friday I'm going to be hosting a golf tournament in aid of Yee Hong long-term care. It's a charity golf tournament and I would welcome anybody who would want to come and pay some money for the good cause that this is. I'm also quite pleased that our government is helping the Yee Hong Centre in terms of 200 new long-term-care beds at their facility in Markham. I know they are building another facility in Mississauga as well—great work being done by the volunteers of the Yee Hong committee.

Our 20,000 new long-term-care beds will be on stream by 2004, plus an additional 16,000 existing outdated beds are being renovated to bring them up to standard.

We have also made other improvements that would benefit many seniors. We have increased the number of MRIs in Ontario from 12 in 1995-96 to 42 today, and have approved another 10. We have established 16 regional and district stroke centres since 2000. We have reduced the waiting time for cardiac surgery by 50% since 1996.

We are undertaking more initiatives to prepare for our rapidly aging society, to protect the health and well-being of seniors. Seniors are the most vulnerable to many illnesses. As the population ages, eye disease, osteoporosis and dementia are common illnesses afflicting them. Our government has addressed and provided increased support to assist seniors who are affected by these diseases.

To reflect the higher cost of using our drug program, we announced that we would provide almost \$200 million more in 2003-04 to cover these increases. Our

government spent approximately \$2.1 billion for drug programs in 2002-03, an increase of about 112%. That's a substantial increase: 112% since 1994-95. More needs to be done; I know that. I know my esteemed colleagues will agree with that. In the 2003 budget we announced that spending on the Ontario drug benefit program would increase to \$2.3 billion—again, a substantial increase of 132% since 1994-95. Also, since 1994-95 more than 1,300 products have been added to the formulary, bringing the total number of products to more than 3,200 prescription drugs available today. Ontario's drug benefit program is the most comprehensive of its kind in the whole of Canada.

The Ministry of Citizenship and the Ministry of the Attorney General, in partnership with seniors' groups and other stakeholders, are implementing Canada's first provincial strategy to combat elder abuse. The Attorney General has committed more than \$4 million over five years from our victims' justice fund, starting in 2002-03, for our elder abuse strategy, to ensure that seniors can live with dignity, are treated with respect and are protected from harm or abuse. The strategy focuses on three priorities: coordination of local services, training of front-line staff from various professions and public education to raise awareness of elder abuse.

To help seniors live independently, my colleague the Minister of Citizenship and minister responsible for seniors, the hard-working Honourable Carl DeFaria, also launched a guide to provincial, federal, municipal and community programs and services for seniors on February 7, 2003. This guide to programs and services in Ontario lists provincial, federal, municipal and community services for seniors. It gives Ontario seniors the information they need to help them lead independent, fulfilling lives.

To assist seniors to live safely and securely in their own homes, the Ontario seniors' secretariat also provides educational seminars on subjects such as avoiding investment fraud, safe driving, safe use of medications and advanced care planning. To assist seniors living in retirement homes, the province provided \$1.1 million to the Ontario Residential Care Association.

I'm pleased to be supporting the budget. There's much more that needs to be done. Let me assure the people at home that we, the government, will continue making these reforms.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): I'd very much like to react to the comments by the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale. If we were federal, you'd have to say it in English and French and it would take half your speech.

The first thing I must say is that I know the member and I believe he is sincere in his beliefs about things. But I must tell him that the seniors that I meet certainly don't see that they have been favoured heretofore by this government.

It's quite revealing—as a matter of fact it's indicative and telling that this budget begins to address and target

seniors in a variety of fashions, because they know that many seniors are dissatisfied with this government. They know they're dissatisfied with long-term care. As a matter of fact, there was a report, yesterday or this morning, that mentioned that 88 long-term-care facilities—homes for the aged—were deemed to be substandard in this province because of the poor funding that was available to them.

Rather than offering \$450 million to help shore up long-term care and home care—one of the biggest complaints I get in my riding, and I suspect you get in yours, is that home care has been cut or, if it's available to you, you now have to pay for it. So for the measly little amount of money that someone is going to get back, a hundred bucks, ask them to add up what they've lost over the period. That's exactly why you're targeting them: because you know they're very dissatisfied and displeased. I don't think you're going to be able to buy off votes in this election at this particular time. I don't think seniors are that stupid and I don't think the attempt to buy their votes will win the day. Shore up their programs instead.

Mr Bisson: The member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale made a comment that I thought I had to ask a question about. He says his government was putting in place, by way of the policies in the election document, measures to help seniors stay in their homes, and he points to the tax credit. I guess there are a couple of things that I have to ask him.

First of all, if you think cuts to the education portion of property tax on houses for seniors are an issue, how do you allow people who are renters to benefit by way of that policy? It seems to me that if your stated goal is to assist seniors living independently at home, wherever that home may be, you would have some sort of a universal policy that would assist all seniors, no matter where they live. But what we seem to have is a policy that just speaks to people who actually own homes. So is it that you only care about seniors who own their own homes and you don't care about seniors who rent? I think it's a fair question and I'd like to have an answer to that.

The other one is, if you're really saying that your government put in place a whole bunch of measures in order to help seniors, why is it that your government basically made the humungous changes that they did to the CCACs? Budgets have been flatlined, with the result that many CCACs across the province are having to reduce the amount of hours available for seniors who stay in their homes independently. In fact, we all have examples across the province, in our ridings, of seniors who have had to be institutionalized because the service that they used to get from their CCAC has been reduced to the point that they can't live independently in their homes.

So it seems to me your government should have taken a more universal approach and said, "Let's put back some of the money that we need to re-invest in CCACs to allow people to live independently in their homes." And

why is it that his government only cares about people who own houses and not people who live in apartments?

1720

Mr AL McDonald (Nipissing): It's my pleasure to stand in my place and join the debate on the budget. I just have to look at my riding and what this government has done. There's a new hospital in North Bay. There's a new hospital in Mattawa. There's a children's treatment centre. They're four-laning Highway 11 north. They've included tax incentive zones throughout the north, which is going to help all of us.

But what I don't understand is why the opposition is against tax relief for seniors. When I talk to a lot of senior citizens, they hear about this tax relief—and it's upwards of \$500. I heard the member opposite say "a measly 500 bucks." Well, I don't know what kind of income level he's at, or what his residents are at, but I can tell you that in my riding of Nipissing those senior citizens welcome that tax relief so that they may be able to stay in their homes.

As taxes go up municipally, and just all the different things that go up, they are very fearful that they are going to have to leave their homes. I can tell you that they like this relief. It's a good thing. I don't understand why the opposition doesn't stand up and say, "You know what? We're wrong. We'll support this." At this point, they're sticking to their guns. They're not voting for this. As a matter of fact, they're voting against this. I guess the question really is, what do they have against senior citizens?

The other one that I find very interesting is young couples trying to buy a house. They might have a child or two, and they're scraping their money together. Now we can have this deductibility on their taxes so that they would be able to buy a house and move into it. Let's face it: young couples want to move into their own house. It's a sense of pride for them.

I must say that I'm very disappointed with what I'm hearing from the opposite side—that, really, they're not trying to help our seniors or our young couples.

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): I'm pleased to rise and make a few comments about the Conservative budget of late, the one that was delivered outside of the House and not in the Legislature where many of us, and many of the public, believe it should have taken place, with the members of Parliament.

There was nothing in the budget about rural schools. I was very disappointed with that. You might remember that, under the flawed formula that is in place for our schools, the first school in Ontario that was closed with this fatally flawed formula was Romney Central in my riding. It was a wonderful school in a rural setting. The school did not qualify for a rural grant. It did not qualify for a remote grant. But it was out in a most rural setting, where even deer ran through the backyard. There couldn't have been a school that was more rural than that one, I say to members. But their formula has allowed schools to close and just rip the heart out of communities in rural Ontario, and in small urban Ontario as well.

There was nothing in the budget about monies for a made-in-Ontario farm safety net. Farmers in Ontario have been waiting for the government to come forward and say what part, what role and how many dollars they are going to supply for our farm safety nets.

There was nothing in the budget to help farmers comply with the new nutrient management rules. There was no mention of monies for them in that regard.

There was nothing in this budget about helping municipalities with roads, bridges and infrastructure. Funding for OSTAR—the Ontario small town and rural development initiative—is repeated for the fourth time. Since his \$600-million program was announced three years ago, less than 25% of the money has actually been spent in those rural communities that desperately need the help.

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): I'm particularly pleased to be able to join in this two-minute debate in response to the great speech that was made by my esteemed colleague from Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale, who, I should add, is an extremely hard-working member of the Legislature and clearly understands the great contribution that the Ernie Eves government has made to prosperity in his riding, of course, as well as my great riding of Scarborough Centre.

It really doesn't surprise me that the rebuttals we have heard from both the Liberal and NDP benches didn't speak to the really good things in this budget. My colleague discussed the seniors. As my colleague from Nipissing so astutely explained, I think it's a huge insult to all of the seniors in this great province of ours when the member for Ottawa Centre would suggest that the education tax credit is a measly amount. I can tell you that the seniors I've been hearing from in my riding are very pleased with this initiative and others that are contained within the budget document. I think the member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale is to be congratulated for informing us of what a great budget it is.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale now has two minutes to respond.

Mr Gill: I congratulate the member for Scarborough Centre, who so nicely had the two-minute debate and summed up a lot of issues that were brought up.

I want to address a specific issue, which I think the member for Timmins-James Bay didn't quite listen to when I was bringing it forward. I will go back and reiterate: in 2003, seniors who own or rent their homes would be eligible for a credit that would reimburse their portion of the residential property tax. They will pay on the principal residence for the period after July 1, 2003, and in 2004, the relief would be based on the full year's residential education property tax paid. I know that was a specific question that the member for Timmins-James Bay had brought forward. I also want to thank the member for Ottawa Centre—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order. The bantering back forth—your own colleague and the member for Timmins-James Bay are hogging. Please continue.

Mr Gill: Thank you, Speaker. You're doing a wonderful job in refereeing the two sides at this point. I want to thank the members for Ottawa Centre, my great, esteemed colleague AL McDonald from Nipissing, Chatham-Kent-Essex and Scarborough Centre.

I also want to touch on what somebody said was a measly amount, \$500. To me, \$500 dollars is not a measly amount, or any amount that the taxpayers have worked so hard for and paid into the treasury. It is money that belongs to them. If we have any tax cuts or if we take in extra revenues, I think it's fair that we give that money back to the rightful owners. It is the consumers who know very much how to spend the money; it's not the government that is the best to spend the money.

Mr Joseph Cordiano (York South-Weston): I'm pleased to join in this debate, but I can't help thinking that it sure would be nice to have these debates on the election campaign trail. It would be most appropriate. The time has come for the people of this province to decide whether in fact this is a budget worthy of support.

I can't help but think also that the people of this province would say that this is truly a cynical budget. It was born and conceived in a cynical way at the auto parts plant in Brampton. We certainly debated the matter before this House for a considerable amount of time, and justifiably so. This was a budget that was, for the very first time in the history of this province, intentionally read outside of the Legislative Assembly. Therefore, I say it is a cynical budget. It's a budget that this government has introduced in many respects to curry favour with the voters, but in the most cynical kind of way because it doesn't all add up. It is a very dangerous budget in the long run, as have been many previous budgets that this government has introduced.

1730

We are experiencing a great economic boom. We continue to experience that in Ontario. Before too long—and I hope not—we may see that turn around and we may see more difficult times ahead. In fact, this budget estimates forecasts of 3% GDP growth, which is quite rosy. Many banks have said in fact that this is a rosy outlook, that it cannot be sustained and that the government should curtail some of those projections back down to 2.5% growth. But the government continues to say that good times will be ahead and in fact plans for that GDP growth as an integral part of this budget. So the revenue projections that have been made by the budget are too positive and overshoot what will be the reality, and as a result, this government may find itself in a deficit position, just from that overshooting of the estimates.

I think Ontarians have to be very cynical about this budget. I want to talk about some of the essential features of this budget and as well about what the government has proposed in its platform as we approach an election campaign. But before I do that, I want to just quote

various groups, economists and editorial pages and what they had to say.

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce: This budget gives "optimistic revenue projections" which "may hamper the government's ability to keep its commitment in key areas such as health care, education and transportation." Very interesting, from the Ontario Chamber of Commerce.

The Canadian Urban Transit Association says, "[We] are disappointed that [our] recommendation to dedicate three cents a litre of current gas taxes toward public transit funding was missing from today's Ontario budget," unlike what we are proposing to do. Liberals propose to dedicate two cents a litre toward the funding of public transit.

Various economists have commented. Don Drummond, TD economist, says, "In essence, they are presenting a \$2-billion deficit in 2003." Of course he's referring to the \$2-billion hole that exists in this budget, a \$2-billion hole that the government proposes to fill by having a fire sale of assets. They've done that previously, or have at least proposed it previously. Some \$2.2 billion in assets has to be sold to actually balance the budget in the coming year.

I want to quote Paul Pagnuelo from the Canadian Taxpayers Federation: "They get an Oscar for the best fiction movie of the year, the Fudge It Budget." That's what he called it: the Fudge It Budget.

Then there are the editorials from the various Toronto dailies. The Toronto Sun, no less a supporter of the Conservative government of Mr Eves, and Mr Harris before him, and I quote: "Yesterday, under Premier Ernie Eves, Ontario Finance Minister Janet Ecker delivered a budget in which image was everything and substance was, if not nothing, then almost nothing."

The National Post, an ardent supporter of this Conservative government, says, "Overall, what is missing from this budget, much as it has been from most of Mr Eves's decisions, is a clear sense of purpose."

So there you have it, from a wide range of people, editorialists, economists and various groups, most of whom have supported this government. They're all saying the same thing. This government has brought forward a very cynical budget, designed, I believe, to try and shore up support for the Conservative government. Its electoral prospects do not look good going into this election campaign. This is a very cynical budget.

Those of us who sit on this side of the House can't help but repeat that. Inasmuch as we are partisan and that is what we do in this House—we are different parties; we are members of the official opposition, charged with the responsibility to hold the government to account—we couldn't do that when the budget was read away from this assembly. When the budget was read outside of this place, the members of this assembly could not hold this government to account. In fact, we are still debating the budget long after the budget was introduced, almost two months ago. This is why we can't help but be cynical about it.

As well, let's look at some of the major planks, major proposals, by this government. This is in their election platform but it is backed up by the budget: going forward, they will have to fund this.

Let's talk about the idea the government has with respect to a tax credit for mortgage interest, a mortgage break for citizens who have bought a house and have a mortgage. The government often cites, "They do it in the States. We should do it here. It's a good idea; it gives people a tax break." Let's look at it.

For all intents and purposes, the way this government has operated on tax breaks in general, they have repeatedly allowed people at the top end of the income scale to receive the highest percentage gain from whatever tax break has been instituted by this government. The same will be said for this mortgage break, although they capped the amount, but of course the more of a mortgage you have, probably the more you're going to qualify for. We don't have the details, but let me just say this. The reason this mortgage break is not an effective way to go about cutting taxes or providing some assistance is because it doesn't target the group that needs the most help. It doesn't target people with low incomes and it doesn't target first-time homebuyers. It's an across-the-board break.

The other reason this is a flawed idea is because the mortgage relief that is being provided is done in Canada. In fact, what we have here is no capital gains on your principal residence. In the US, if we compare the two countries, they do have a capital gains on a principal residence once it's sold. If you're going to provide mortgage interest rate relief on top of a capital gains, it certainly increases the amount of money that's going toward this. But when you compare it to the US, there's no reason to provide mortgage interest rate relief when you do already have a capital gains relief at the end. Once someone does sell their principal residence, they're not taxed on it. That's the greatest benefit there is in terms of a tax break. So I would say that this is a flawed idea from that perspective as well, and we could hardly afford it.

The other thing this will do is increase the price of houses right across the board. It will create additional demand, which is probably not a bad thing, but it will also drive prices upwards. This has been the experience south of the border. That is another specific reason for this flawed plan not to be a good idea at this time.

The other interesting plank that has been brought forward is the break for seniors on the education portion of their property tax. I might even consider supporting something like this if it were targeted to seniors who are living on fixed incomes alone. It is not. It will in fact benefit seniors who are at the highest end of the income scale—seniors, for example, like Frank Stronach, chairman of Magna Corp. He will receive a huge benefit as a result of this break, as will many other people who are in high income tax brackets. They hardly need a break. I think those revenues ought to be dedicated toward

seniors who genuinely need the help, and then I would say to the government it would be a good idea.

1740

In fact, we used to have a break for seniors. I recall that in the 1980s we used to have a property tax grant which was given to seniors. That was probably not a bad idea then and it wouldn't be a bad idea now. But to give a tax break right across the board which disproportionately benefits the very wealthiest in our society is the wrong thing to do, particularly now when there are so many other pressing needs.

Those two ideas are very flawed, and I say to the government that they are the most cynical kinds of electioneering I have seen. They're designed to gain votes on the part of the government, to get the maximum benefit at election time. I would say to seniors, think about this in that context. It benefits the wealthiest among us, the people who least need that kind of tax relief, and those people who need more tax relief will not get it. It is a very cynical ploy on the part of the government.

When we look at this budget in its entirety, where's the real benefit to people in the province? Where's the real benefit in terms of health care? This is a government that is using health money that comes from Ottawa to balance last year's budget to the tune of \$967 million. It's going to count on \$771 million next year from the federal government as well. Again, that's based on a very rosy outlook in terms of the economy performing, probably a flawed strategy. I hope the economy keeps chugging along, but frankly it may not. Nonetheless, this government will bank on that money before it even has it.

There are gaping problems in our health care system, and we see it. In my riding alone, the matter with regard to renovations and updating the local hospital, Humber River Regional Hospital, still hasn't been resolved. I say to the government, you closed one of the acute care facilities, Northwestern General Hospital, and that is still a problem in my riding. We experienced the greatest number of ambulatory redirects and critical care bypasses, more than any other hospital in the GTA. That's just an unacceptable situation. It is incumbent upon the government to recognize when there are real needs, pressing needs, acute care facilities that are left dangling in a community that is left without the very services it needs to depend on.

It is incumbent upon this government to explain in education, for example, why it's only funding 57% of the promises it made when Dr Rozanski brought his report forward last December. They made a commitment to fund \$610 million in pledges, and they've only increased funding to education by \$349 million, 57% of the way.

I say, in light of what's happening with the Toronto Catholic District School Board lockout, that blame can rest squarely on the shoulders of this government for what has happened there and the kind of situation we have presently with the kids being out of school, the teachers locked out of the school, and the strife that exists currently between the board and the teachers. The

government has caused this. If you look at the funding formula, the Toronto board has fallen behind in its ability to fund necessary programs. We know that Toronto school boards have special needs above and beyond some of the other school boards across this province: English as a second language, just to name one, and special education programs. These were all programs that took increasing amounts of revenues to sustain. What's happened in Toronto, with the Toronto Catholic District School Board in particular, is that they fell behind in terms of paying their teachers at the same level as other GTA boards, because of these additional requirements in previous years. What has resulted is an institutionalization of inequity in terms of salary structure for the teachers.

Do not be deceived, I say to the people of this province. This government would like to blame teachers for the problems that we face. The fact is, there is an inequity in terms of the salary structure as a result of the lack of funding in previous years, as a result of the funding formula that was in place. It's institutionalized. They're not going to be able to catch up unless you give them additional funding. You still haven't funded the Rozanski report 100%.

The Toronto Catholic District School Board has fallen behind and they chose to lock people out. Now they're saying, "Let's have back-to-work legislation," falling right into your hands.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: The minister is cat-calling and he isn't even in his seat.

Hon Mr Stockwell: For that?

The Acting Speaker: I would suggest that if you want to heckle, you should at least be in your seat and keep it quiet. Please continue.

Mr Cordiano: The government wants the public to believe that it's somebody else's fault. Well, when it comes to this lockout, it is entirely on the shoulders of this provincial government. Their lack of funding in the past, the inequities that existed, the funding formula and the way it's structured, have caused institutionalized inequities. The board had no choice but to fund special education programs, to fund English-as-a-second-language programs, in Toronto, with high needs and high demands for those kinds of special programs. They fell behind and as a result the teachers were not being paid at the same level as other boards. So they have a point.

The board, in order to resolve this lockout situation, should look no further than this provincial government and say, "Why haven't you come to our aid? Why haven't you recognized the inequities that exist?"

They would have us believe that it's all the teachers' fault, that the teachers are to blame in this lockout situation. Nothing could be further from the truth. They are asking to be at the same level of salary structure as other GTA boards, and I think that's appropriate. They're not asking for anything more; they're asking to be at the same salary levels. The government could resolve this

matter very quickly if it wanted to. It lies at your doorstep.

There are a number of other things that are wrong with this budget. I have run out of time, but let me just conclude by saying that this is a very cynical budget that was introduced by this government in a cynical fashion—it's never been done in the history of this province—and, for that reason, no one should be fooled by this government's budget.

Mr Bisson: First of all, I wouldn't call this a budget. The exercise that the government engaged in was a media stunt. It was nothing near to a budget. Now we're into a budget debate. That's a different thing.

I have just three things. One is with regard to a comment made earlier by the member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale, who says that they're doing great things to help seniors live independently at home by way of giving them relief on property tax credits on their homes. I posed the question to him and said, "It seems to me if you wanted to have an approach of allowing people to live independently in their homes, you should have a universal approach that treats everybody the same, because that particular policy would not be applicable to renters." I couldn't believe my ears: the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale got up and said, "It's going to apply to renters." I just heard policy being changed. I want to know how the heck that's going to work. All I know is that if the landlord gets a rebate on his taxes for a senior living in his building, there's no mechanism in what they've announced that would allow that saving to go directly on to the renter. I think either the member doesn't know what he talks about or he's divulging further spin that's going to come out of the Conservative campaign document.

1750

The other comment I want to make is to the member for York South-Weston in regard to the whole thing around the teachers. I think he's right: this is nothing more than a government that's trying to play a hot-button issue by pressing the teacher issue. That's all this is about. If they really wanted to resolve this strike, they would have done what my House leader and Rosario Marchese had suggested, which was to refer the matter to a mutually agreed-upon arbitrator so that they're able to make a decision that's binding to both parties. That would have resolved the issue—or they could have put the money into the board in order to reach equity; one or the other. What they're doing now is nothing more than bashing teachers.

The Acting Speaker: Further comments?

Hon Mr Stockwell: Thank you, sir.

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): You wanted to bring the Rolling Stones.

Hon Mr Stockwell: No, that was a Liberal. Dennis Mills, wasn't it?

It's funny to listen to a good Italian Catholic, my friend Joe Cordiano over there—

Interjection: Hey.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Not that there aren't good Italian Catholics on both sides of this House—talk about separate school funding and the unfairness of our situation and our position. You should know better than any that we were the ones who actually fully funded the separate school system. You should know that, Joe. You should know that you made the promise as a Liberal government when you were in the administration and didn't do a darn thing about it.

Then, when we came to office, we went through the pooling process and provided industrial and commercial taxes to the separate school system so that it would be on a fair and equal footing. Do you know how you voted on that? You voted against it. You voted against that initiative, that bill that provided funding for the separate school system on a fair and equitable basis to the public school system.

Then you have the nerve to stand up here today and tell us the challenge we face is that we're not fairly funding the separate school system. I mean, that has to be hypocrisy on stilts. I never heard anything so ridiculous in my life. The separate school system had a windfall of cash because of the position this government took with respect to pooling and fair funding.

So, my good Italian Catholic friend from west Toronto, close to my riding, I know you'll want to go back to your constituents and say that when it came to fair funding, you voted against it. There can't possibly be any propriety in your position. It's very upsetting to me. After we went through all the trouble and all the grief to fund the separate school system equally to the public school system, you're telling us that we're not funding them fairly.

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain): Boy, I had other comments prepared to talk about the budget, but the performance from the member from Etobicoke Centre begs a number of questions. First of all, I'd like to know why you think it's important to refer to the person's ethnicity when you're debating—"good Italian Catholic" three times. That's silly. That brings the debate down, and you know it.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Because his kids go to separate school.

Mrs Bountrogianni: There are a lot of people from different ethnicities in separate schools, as there are in public schools, and you know that. So why even put that? You're not doing your caucus any favours by speaking that way.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Wake up.

Mrs Bountrogianni: I think your colleagues should wake up and put a muzzle on you, member from Etobicoke Centre, because you are not doing them any favours at all.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I'll do my best.

Mrs Bountrogianni: Thank you. I would appreciate you doing your best.

I'd like to comment on the budget now, and I'd like to thank my colleague from York South-Weston for the excellent debate on the actual issue of the budget. First of

all, from the beginning, this whole process was flawed. The Magna budget: we got a budget in a factory. Do you know that kids all across the province in grade 10 civics classes are talking about the lack of democracy in this process? Do you know that? Are you aware of that?

Hon Mr Stockwell: I have a kid in grade 10.

Mrs Bountrogianni: I hope that he comes to you with his complaints on the democracy, as well as for the \$36-billion warrant signed by two cabinet ministers.

The Acting Speaker: Order, please. The government House leader and former Speaker certainly knows better. Please continue.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I apologize.

Mrs Bountrogianni: Half the budget, \$36 billion, signed away by two cabinet ministers? Regardless of what you think of warrants, the fact that that amount of money was signed by two cabinet ministers to be spent is tremendously undemocratic, and you know that.

I only have a few seconds left, but there was nothing in the budget for operation grants for post-secondary schools. It looks like we're going to have yet another round of anxiety from students from the universities, as we had in the last two years with the double cohort. With respect to the education tax for seniors, most of the seniors I speak to feel it is their right to fund education.

Hon Mr Stockwell: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: My point of order is a clarification. In any cabinet meeting, an OIC is signed by the affected cabinet minister and the chair of cabinet. The entire point you were talking about was passed in front of an entire cabinet. Every motion or OIC is signed by two cabinet ministers.

The Acting Speaker: That was not a point of order, but it was interesting.

Mrs Bountrogianni: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The point was that it didn't come here, that half the budget didn't come here for debate.

The Acting Speaker: You have both made your points.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order, please.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): That's the problem with the government House leader. He just doesn't know how to accept a compliment gracefully.

Saturday morning I was up in Montebello Park in St Catharines with Niagara regional members of the Schizophrenia Society of Ontario. They're doing a walkathon along with similar regional groups of the Schizophrenia Society of Ontario—persons with schizophrenia, families of persons with schizophrenia, consumers, friends and advocates.

One of the things of great concern that was expressed was this budget's failure to address the acute needs of so many communities, indeed every community, and so many families and individuals within those communities with respect to adequate funding for mental health services. Down in Niagara region, we've been robbed of the nine adolescent mental health beds that we were promised. We've seen ongoing underfunding of mental health services, most acutely in the area of youth and

adolescent mental health services. It was brought to my attention so poignantly and so powerfully by families who deal with schizophrenia and other serious mental illnesses, especially amongst young people the inadequacy of this government when it comes to providing resources so that we can treat persons with mental illness: the lack of hospital beds for mental health patients and, once again, especially youth and adolescents. What happens is that youth and adolescent mental health patients, especially those arriving at the hospital in crisis, end up being put into adult psychiatric units. That's dangerous. It's not supportive of proper mental health treatment. It's counterproductive. One of the many real tragedies is the lack of adequate funding for mental health services in this government's budget.

The Acting Speaker: Finally, the member for York South-Weston has two minutes.

Mr Cordiano: Let me say to the House leader, you know I'm very proud of my Italian-Canadian heritage. I know he meant no offence to Italian-Canadians, that they somehow owed this government a debt of gratitude for funding separate schools.

Hon Mr Stockwell: They do.

Mr Cordiano: Oh, come on. Listen, it was my colleague and friend the then Minister of Education, Sean Conway, who brought a separate school funding bill into this House.

Hon Mr Stockwell: No, he didn't.

Mr Cordiano: Sure he did. We funded the extension of separate school funding. So let's not go there. Let's not discuss that.

The other fact is, with respect to funding, it's Toronto that you have prejudiced time and again, because you haven't funded Toronto with the notion that Toronto has additional needs. The funding formula, as I've repeated, does not reflect that. So what you're talking about is total nonsense. The funding formula does not respect special consideration for Toronto's high needs. We have the largest immigrant population. Newly arrived Canadians need English-as-a-second-language. With respect to adult education, you've cut one of the schools serving all those new immigrants, new Canadians who need help to get started. What did you do? You cut the legs right out from under it. Repeatedly this government has shown its total neglect of the city of Toronto, and as a government you have completely undermined the ability of the boards of education in this city to fund those special needs. They need additional resources. Your funding formula doesn't reflect that. Per pupil student funding just doesn't cut it. It tries to equalize things in a phony kind of way. It doesn't recognize and acknowledge that Toronto is different, that it has a higher immigrant population. You totally ignore that.

The Acting Speaker: It now being 6 o'clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 tomorrow afternoon.

Hon Mr Stockwell: It's not quite six o'clock.

The Acting Speaker: It is six o'clock. I can see it from here and I'm in the chair.

The House adjourned at 1800.

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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

Fourth Session, 37th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Quatrième session, 37^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 27 May 2003

Mardi 27 mai 2003

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 27 May 2003

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 27 mai 2003

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ENERGY CONTRACTS

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): I want to bring to the attention of the House that the sleek scam artists are back at work, back in our communities and prowling, preying on the most defenceless people, the seniors, those who have difficulties understanding our laws, contracts and languages.

I wonder why Consumers' Gas and Direct Energy keep on sending their representatives into our communities to prey on these people. Let me read from a letter I received in my office. On April 27, a representative of Direct Energy Marketing Ltd came to this particular address, spoke to this particular lady, identified himself as a representative of the gas company who had come to update their files—updating their files is a new way of getting to these people—asked to see a copy of the gas bill, took down the information and then let them sign a receipt. Indeed, this was a brand new contract, and now the people are bound to a new contract at a higher rate.

We've been bringing this to the attention of the government, and again today I am raising this issue in the House. Our people need peace of mind. They need protection when it comes to scam artists. I'm impressing upon the Premier and the government today to go after Consumers' Gas and Direct Energy and protect the people of Ontario.

BEVERLY PHIPPEN

Mr AL McDonald (Nipissing): Today I rise before the House to speak to you about a very special constituent of mine, an inspiration to all Canadians, Mrs Beverly Phippen.

Beverly is a member of the Ontario Special Olympics team that participated in the 14th annual Special Olympics northern region power lifting invitational in North Bay. Through Beverly's continuous hard work, determination and dedication to her sport, and as an athlete in the Special Olympics, her performances at the northern regionals earned her the award of best female lifter, not to mention setting two new Canadian records for dead lift and total weights categories.

Beverly's win at the northern regionals has also given her the opportunity to represent Canada at the upcoming

Special Olympics World Summer Games, to be held in Dublin, Ireland, from June 16 to June 29. There is also history being made, as this will be the first time in Special Olympics history that their World Summer Games are held outside North America.

Beverly has represented both Ontario and Canada at numerous games locally, regionally and internationally. She has shown exceptional leadership, dedication and courage as a Special Olympian.

It's very exciting for me, as MPP of Nipissing, to see one of my own constituents having the opportunity to represent North Bay and Canada in the summer games. I would like to extend best wishes and congratulations to Beverly and all the Team Canada Special Olympians. Best of luck in your quest for gold in Dublin.

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr John C. Cleary (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): I rise today to address an important issue pertaining to health care and the well-being of my constituents.

Since 1996, hospital restructuring in the Cornwall area has been an ongoing process, and while a made-in-Cornwall solution is currently ready to be implemented, a funding commitment from the provincial government remains unavailable.

Following the advice of the provincial health care restructuring commission, the Cornwall community came together on January 22, 2003, to explore the possible solutions to hospital restructuring in the area. The resulting town hall hospital services committee developed a plan which ensured that the community would be provided with the highest quality and most affordable health care possible.

In April 2002, the committee of the Religious Hospitals of St Joseph Health Centre Corp submitted a proposal to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care for their consideration. On February 12, 2003, after much deliberation, Minister Clement announced his intention of support for the plan, which included the establishment of a community-based corporation which was proposed to establish joint governance of the two hospitals, centralizing acute care services at the site of Hotel Dieu, and provided a price tag that Cornwall and area residents could support.

The new corporation and board followed, with 12 directors.

Evidently, without provincial funding, this proposal cannot continue. As I stated, the funding was agreed to in

principle, and the 30-day period for public consultation has now come to an end. We know this plan will take approximately five years to complete. I call on the minister to take the appropriate steps to make the funding available. I want to ensure that the health care of my constituents is not compromised and that the wishes of the community are fully granted. The community has lived up to its agreement, and now it's time for the minister to do the same.

GLENN CUTHBERTSON

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): I rise today to talk about some of the best teachers in the entire world, who are right here in the province of Ontario. Many of them struggle long and hard to deliver education in what are often very difficult circumstances and to bring out the very best talents in our children.

Each year the Ontario Federation of Home and School Associations names an Educator of the Year. It is my very proud honour to announce to this House that this year's recipient is Glenn Cuthbertson, a grade 4 and 5 teacher at Presteign Heights public school in Toronto.

He was nominated for this award by two parents of his present students, one of whom is Nancy Laurain-Martin. She had a great deal to say, in our local newspaper, about Mr Cuthbertson. She said that he was absolutely shocked to be nominated for this award. She said to him, "'You're the best teacher in the school and also the best educator in Ontario.' He blushed. He was very moved."

"She said her son Joseph, who is in grade 5, can tell her about cloning and new scientific discoveries—things he learned in Cuthbertson's class. 'He reads the newspaper and he's only 10,' she said."

She also went on to say that Glenn Cuthbertson treats each child with the utmost respect. "He helps them become citizens of the world. I'm in awe of his ability to teach the curriculum and apply it to life learning."

Mr Cuthbertson, when given the award, said, "It's an incredible honour for me to be recognized in this way. Half of the people in my family are teachers. My brothers were teachers and principals and my wife is a professor at the University of Toronto."

Our entire community takes our hat off and says congratulations, Mr Cuthbertson. A job well done.

MUSEUMS IN MISSISSAUGA

Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South): May is Museum Month, a time to celebrate the vital role our museums play in preserving our heritage. This is an ideal occasion to recognize the exceptional museums of Mississauga and the dedicated volunteers and staff who are responsible for their success.

The Bradley Museum, an 1830s farmhouse, was the home of United Empire Loyalist Lewis Bradley and his family. It has been restored to reveal the life of early settlers. The Anchorage, a Regency-style cottage ad-

jacent to the Bradley Museum, was the retirement home of Royal Navy officer John Skynner. It houses changing exhibits and a tea room.

1340

The Benares Historic House, also located in Mississauga South, was home to four generations of the Harris and Sayers families. Benares is believed to be the inspiration for the Canadian author Mazo de la Roche's famed "Whiteoaks of Jalna" novels. This Georgian-style house, with its beautiful park-like grounds, has been restored to reflect daily life in 1918.

Much more than windows on the past, these museums offer entertaining events year-round, such as a Christmas craft show and sale, Maple Magic, an old-fashioned strawberry social, a teddy bear picnic and a fall fair.

Our community owes its appreciation to the museum board chairs, Wendy Davies of Bradley Museum and Margaret Adolphe of Benares, and the other dedicated board members, as well as the volunteers who help with research, special events and fundraising. Along with our excellent museum staff, they have done a superb job of bringing local history to life for the people of today.

Congratulations on your commitment and hard work. I'm proud that all these museums are in Mississauga South.

VEHICLE INSURANCE

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): It's almost impossible to convey the level of frustration faced by almost all drivers in northwestern Ontario about the rapidly increasing cost for vehicle insurance in this province. While this is affecting drivers, I need to express particular concern to the Premier about the impact this is having on businesses and commercial vehicles in particular, and specifically about how these totally unreasonable increases are threatening the northern economy.

The forest products industry is already facing enormous challenges, but the fact that massive increases in insurance are forcing logging truck operators out of business is another serious blow to the industry.

If you happen to run a vehicle towing business, the example of Kevin Holland, whose insurance costs for one vehicle have almost quadrupled in price to over \$10,000 a year, despite no claims being made, represents the norm being faced by business people in the Thunder Bay district.

The insurance industry says that they are facing enormous losses unless they jack up the rates. Whatever happened to a company's loyalty to its customers? The industry is simply cancelling insurance for long-time and claim-free customers, forcing many to access the dreaded and expensive Facility Association.

The government demands that we have insurance before we can drive any vehicle. Yet what are they doing to help? Recent legislation that would have potentially reduced rates at least a fraction is sitting in limbo.

The Premier has made no effort to protect good drivers from these unconscionable increases, nor has he acknowledged that action is needed. While he is missing in action, drivers are fuming, businesses and jobs are being lost and the economy is being threatened by a crisis that can no longer be ignored.

I say to the Premier: speak up and at least tell us you recognize the problem and are prepared to act.

SCENIC CITY ORDER OF GOOD CHEER

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): I rise in the House today to support a local organization, of which I am member, named the Scenic City Order of Good Cheer. The original Order of Good Cheer was founded in the year of Our Lord 1606 by Samuel de Champlain.

The Scenic City Order of Good Cheer is a successful organization with the focus of improving the waterfront, rivers and natural and cultural features of Owen Sound and area. A total of 12 members and their spouses dedicate their time and effort to community projects.

Most recently, the Order of Good Cheer held its ninth annual gourmet festival dinner auction and entertainment cruise. It was held in association with the Sun Times and the Owen Sound Transportation Co aboard the MS Chi-Cheemaun.

I would like to thank the Toronto Maple Leafs 2002-03 team roster members who autographed this year's unique raffle prize item of a Leafs jersey. I would also like to thank the Toronto Maple Leafs alumni, who autographed two special live auction Leafs jerseys.

The Order of Good Cheer has been involved in numerous other projects and community activities. Recently, they founded and built a gazebo on the waterfront for the residents of Owen Sound. The organization has also provided funding for harbourside benches, and contributed to the electrical improvements at Kelso Beach amphitheatre, renovations to the Harry Lumley Bayshore Community Centre, and stream improvement.

I congratulate all the volunteers who worked so diligently to make every event successful and thank them for their hard work.

WATER EXTRACTION

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): It is indeed a cruel irony that the Minister of the Environment, Chris Stockwell, chose Valentine's Day to break the hearts of the people of Perth, when he overturned an Environmental Review Tribunal ruling and granted a staged water-taking permit to the Swiss-owned company OMYA.

For more than three years, the people of Perth have been fighting to protect their water source. In 2001, at great expense to taxpayers, the Environmental Review Tribunal held a 35-day hearing and issued a decision that balanced the needs of the company with environmental

concerns. OMYA appealed this decision to both a judicial review and the minister.

Did the minister wait and let the judicial process take its course? No. With a total disregard for the judicial process, he stepped in and overturned the decision. Once again the Tories put their donors and friends above the concerns of average citizens whose only desire is to protect the environment.

But the people of Perth did not give up easily. Ann German, an 85-year-old resident of Bob's Lake, is taking the minister to court. Minister Stockwell approved a two-phase permit. Miss German, with the aid of the Canadian Environmental Law Association, is arguing that the minister can only grant one permit at a time. This government may turn their back on the environment and disregard due process, but the people of Ontario will not.

I commend Ann German, CELA and the other hard-working volunteers who know that the minister is wrong and continue to fight to protect their water.

CANADIAN CANOE MUSEUM

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): Today I would like to draw to the members' attention a display that is located on the first floor of the Legislative Building. This display features the upcoming Legacy Outdoor Learning Centre at the Canadian Canoe Museum, located in my riding of Peterborough.

The Canadian Canoe Museum evolved from Professor Kirk Wipper's canoe collection that was housed in what was then known as the Kanawa International Museum in Dorset. In 1989, Mr. Wipper transferred control of his historic collection to the newly formed Canadian Canoe Museum in Peterborough.

Visit the Canadian Canoe Museum and you will do more than tour a museum; you will experience Canadian history. On any given day, you might participate in activities from hearing creation stories inside a traditional wigwam, to building a 36-foot birchbark canoe, or you might choose to watch history spring to life as you reenact a fur-trade-era voyageur encampment.

In the year 2000, the museum developed a unique project entitled *The Canoe: A Canadian Cultural Icon*, which explored the enduring significance of the canoe to the people of Canada through nine new exhibits for the museum, three travelling outreach exhibits and curriculum-linked education programs. Now the Canadian Canoe Museum is preparing to take interactive programming to the next level, with the development of an outdoor paddling centre and a visiting artisans program.

I invite all members to visit the display in the Legislative Building and then take a trip to Peterborough to see first-hand the evolution of the Canadian Canoe Museum, from its beginnings in 1957, when Kirk Wipper began his collection, to a world-class museum that reflects on our Canadian history and attracts people from around the globe.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

COUNTY OF HALIBURTON ACT, 2003

Mr Hodgson moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr18, An Act respecting the County of Haliburton.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Pursuant to standing order 84, the bill stands referred to the standing committee on regulations and private bills.

1350

GASOLINE CONSUMER PROTECTION ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 SUR LA PROTECTION DES CONSOMMATEURS D'ESSENCE

Mr Crozier moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 58, An Act to provide information to consumers respecting the price of gasoline and the ownership of gasoline retailers and to require certain additional information from major oil companies / Projet de loi 58, Loi visant à fournir des renseignements aux consommateurs en ce qui concerne le prix de l'essence et l'appartenance des détaillants d'essence et exigeant certains renseignements supplémentaires de la part des grosses sociétés pétrolières.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): In an effort to protect consumers in Ontario, this bill requires every gasoline retailer to advertise a change in the price of gasoline at the retailer's gas station at least 72 hours before changing the price. The bill also requires gasoline retailers to indicate on their price signs what portion of the price is dedicated to tax. The bill requires gasoline retailers that are affiliated with major gasoline retailers to indicate their affiliation on signs at their gas stations and on the receipts issued at their gas stations. Finally, the bill requires large oil companies that produce, refine and market gasoline to file segmented earning reports with the Minister of Consumer and Business Services annually.

ONTARIO DISABILITY SUPPORT PROGRAM AMENDMENT ACT (FAIRNESS IN DISABILITY

INCOME SUPPORT PAYMENTS), 2003 LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LE PROGRAMME ONTARIEN DE SOUTIEN AUX PERSONNES HANDICAPÉES (ÉQUITÉ DANS LES VERSEMENTS DU SOUTIEN DU REVENU)

Mr Martin moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 59, An Act to amend the Ontario Disability Support Program Act, 1997 to require annual cost-of-

living adjustments to income support payments / Projet de loi 59, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur le Programme ontarien de soutien aux personnes handicapées en vue d'exiger des rajustements annuels relatifs au coût de la vie en ce qui concerne les versements du soutien du revenu.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): Some 269,000 people across this province have been waiting a long time for an increase in their income. This bill will do that. It will ask the government to act immediately to not only increase the income of some of our most vulnerable, at-risk citizens but to act retroactively and to tie what they do to the cost of living.

DISCLOSURE AND PROTECTION OF ADOPTION INFORMATION ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 SUR LA DIVULGATION ET LA PROTECTION DE RENSEIGNEMENTS SUR LES ADOPTIONS

Mr Wettlaufer moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 60, An Act to amend the Vital Statistics Act and the Child and Family Services Act in respect of disclosure and protection of adoption information / Projet de loi 60, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les statistiques de l'état civil et la Loi sur les services à l'enfance et à la famille en ce qui concerne la divulgation et la protection de renseignements sur les adoptions.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre): The bill amends the Vital Statistics Act and the Child and Family Services Act in respect of information on adoption. It meets the concerns of the Information and Privacy Commissioner.

I'd like to move unanimous consent for second and third reading.

The Speaker: The member has asked for unanimous consent. Is there unanimous consent? I'm afraid I heard some noes.

TORONTO CATHOLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS STABILITY AND GOOD WILL PROMOTION ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 VISANT À PROMOUVOIR LA STABILITÉ ET LA BONNE VOLONTÉ AU SEIN DES ÉCOLES ÉLÉMENTAIRES DU CONSEIL CATHOLIQUE DE TORONTO

Mr Kennedy moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 61, An Act to promote stability and good will in Toronto Catholic Elementary Schools / Projet de loi 61, Loi visant à promouvoir la stabilité et la bonne volonté au sein des écoles élémentaires du conseil catholique de Toronto.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): This bill ends a lockout of elementary teachers employed by the Toronto Catholic District School Board. It provides for dispute resolution by mediation and arbitration. It's a clean bill that we think, in the unusual circumstance of the 69,000 children, deserves the support of the entire House.

POLICE SERVICES AMENDMENT ACT
(INDEPENDENT POLICE COMPLAINTS
COMMISSIONER), 2003

LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LES SERVICES POLICIERS
EN CE QUI CONCERNE
UN COMMISSAIRE INDÉPENDANT
AUX PLAINTES CONTRE LA POLICE

Mr Hampton moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 62, An Act to amend the Police Services Act with respect to the disciplining of police officers and to reinstate a fair and impartial process with respect to public complaints about police officers / Projet de loi 62, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services policiers relativement au processus disciplinaire d'agents de police et visant à restaurer un processus équitable et objectif pour traiter des plaintes du public concernant la conduite d'agents de police.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): The bill amends the Police Services Act to require an independent police complaints commissioner appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council to deal with complaints by members of the public about the conduct of police officers. The commissioner is independent of police forces and reports annually to the Attorney General. Any member of the public may make a complaint, whereas at present a member of the public may make a complaint only if directly affected by the subject matter of the complaint.

The bill also amends the act to reinstate the process for disciplining police officers that existed before the repeal of part V of the act as of November 27, 1997.

COMPENSATION FOR VICTIMS OF
CRIME AMENDMENT ACT, 2003
LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR L'INDEMNISATION DES VICTIMES
D'ACTES CRIMINELS

Mr Bartolucci moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 63, An Act to amend the Compensation for Victims of Crime Act / Projet de loi 63, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'indemnisation des victimes d'actes criminels.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): The bill amends the Compensation for Victims of Crime Act to allow victims of motor vehicle offences under the Criminal Code, such as impaired driving, to apply for compensation under the act. At present, victims of those offences are not allowed to apply for compensation under the act.

Payments of interim compensation under the act are subject to the limitations specified by the regulations made under the act if the applicant is injured or killed in Ontario, resulting from the commission of an offence described in section 220 or 221, section 249 (3) and/or (4), section 253 or section 255 (2) or (3) of the Criminal Code.

HEALTH INSURANCE
AMENDMENT ACT, 2003
LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR L'ASSURANCE-SANTÉ

Mr Duncan moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 64, An Act to amend the Health Insurance Act to satisfy the criteria for contribution by the Government of Canada set out in the Canada Health Act / Projet de loi 64, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'assurance-santé pour satisfaire aux critères régissant les contributions du gouvernement du Canada et énoncés dans la Loi canadienne sur la santé.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): This bill incorporates the principles of the Canada Health Act into Ontario statute with respect to health. In effect, it prevents any government from creating a two-tier health care system in Ontario. This government had a chance to vote against it once before. It's now part of our platform, and people will choose change.

1400

ONTARIO HERITAGE DAY ACT, 2003
LOI DE 2003 SUR LE JOUR
DU PATRIMOINE DE L'ONTARIO

Mr Agostino moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 65, An Act to proclaim Ontario Heritage Day and to amend other Acts to include Ontario Heritage Day as a holiday / *Projet de loi 65, Loi proclamant le Jour du patrimoine de l'Ontario et modifiant d'autres lois en vue de l'ajouter comme jour férié.*

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): This bill, if passed, would give us an opportunity once a year to celebrate our rich history, our heritage and our traditions in this wonderful province of ours. It would designate the second Monday in June of each year to be Ontario Heritage Day. It would also be a statutory holiday, so Ontarians could have the opportunity to spend time with their families and talk about the great province we have and the great and rich history of this wonderful province of ours.

STALKERS REGISTRY ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 SUR LE REGISTRE DES HARCELEURS

Mr Bartolucci moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 66, An Act to provide greater protection to victims of stalking by providing for a stalkers registry / *Projet de loi 66, Loi visant à mieux protéger les victimes de harcèlement en prévoyant un registre des harceleurs.*

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): This is a very, very serious issue across this province and this country. The bill would be modelled on Christopher's Law (Sex Offender Registry), 2000. It establishes a registry containing the names of persons who have been convicted of a stalking offence.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I move that notwithstanding standing order 96(d), the following changes be made to the ballot list for private members' public business: Mr Spina and Mr Wettlaufer exchange places in order of precedence such that Mr Spina assumes ballot item 46 and Mr Wettlaufer assumes ballot item 14. I move that notwithstanding standing order 96(g), notice for ballot item 11 be waived.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

RUSSELL RAMSAY

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): I'd like to ask for unanimous consent to note the passing of one of our former members, Russell Ramsay, and for all parties to make some comments.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

Hon Mr Sterling: Russell Ramsay was a member for Sault Ste Marie in the period between 1978 and 1985. Russ came here after a by-election was called in 1978 on the untimely death of John Rhodes, who was then the Minister of Trade and who had passed away on a trip in Iran at that point in time.

Those of us who had the pleasure of knowing Russ Ramsay would appreciate one of the most earnest and hard-working MPPs and cabinet ministers one could have experienced in this Legislature. Russ served both as secretary for resources development for a short period of time, from 1981 to 1982, and as Minister of Labour from 1982 to 1985. He lost the election in 1985, but was then appointed, I believe by the then Liberal government, president of the Industrial Accident Prevention Association. Russ served in that post for about 12 years, really gaining the respect—or had the respect I know—of not only the Progressive Conservative Party but also the Liberal Party and the New Democratic Party.

I did have the honour of being present at his funeral in the Soo shortly after his death on February 9 this year. I was heartened to see my colleagues Mike Brown and Tony Martin and my former colleague Bud Wildman at the funeral, sharing the celebration of the life of Russ Ramsay. Russ was a quiet gentleman. Despite that characteristic of almost being shy, he was a very confident man and really was a leader, not only in his community back in the Soo but here.

Russ loved sports. Before he came to Queen's Park, he was the operator-manager of the local radio station in the Soo and used to broadcast the Soo Greyhounds radio broadcasts over that particular area. He carried on that love for sports in his community all through his political career, and at the time he was also serving as president of the IAPA. Each weekend, he would go back to his community, where he lived with, and is survived by, his wife, Margaret, and participate in the Soo. I don't think anyone in the Soo ever doubted his loyalty to his community.

I remember sitting in cabinet with Russ in the 1981-85 period and really getting to know him quite well, usually through private conversation. Russ had the reputation of arriving at his office at the Ministry of Labour before anyone else was in the building. I think he used to arrive at some ungodly hour of about 6:30 in the morning. Russ actually dictated a personal response to every letter he received from anybody, whether it be a constituent of his or a constituent of any of the other members in this

Legislature. He was one of the most hard-working MPPs and ministers I have ever known.

When I attended his funeral in February, along with my colleagues, you could not but be taken by the warmth and love that the people of the Soo had for this man. Not long ago, I think three or four years ago, they held an honorary night in tribute to Russ. I believe they named a street or an avenue and a conference room in their civic facility after this man.

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Russ always had time for the common man, anybody who wanted to talk to him. He took each of his constituent's problems very seriously and was very effective in solving them. He was also unusual in some ways. When an MPP holds a fundraiser within his party, he often invites ministers of his party to that fundraiser, hoping they will come because—I know some of the opposition wouldn't agree with this—that does add some prestige to the event. Of course, there is sort of an unwritten law, when an MPP is invited to one of his colleagues, that there really isn't a requirement for them to make payment, but Russ Ramsay always insisted on sending a cheque. I used to go back and say to Russ, "Look, Russ, we wanted to have you here and we really don't want your money," and Russ would insist on paying his way with regard to that.

In the latter years, he ran for mayor after he retired as president of the IAPA, still taking an active role in his community in the Soo. He continued to help people out in the Soo. He received the Canada Medal as an honour to this outstanding citizen and person.

He suffered, as well, from Alzheimer's in the last couple of years. I was invited to an event at one of the local restaurants here in Toronto while he was in the initial stages of this disease, and all his colleagues from the radio industry had gathered with him. There must have been about 20 or 25 people celebrating with Russ. I was asked to say a few words, having been a colleague of his. But I can only say again that the warmth and friendship and feeling that these people in the Soo exhibited toward Russ are really testament to this man's life.

I think that all members here can celebrate and look to this man as an example of how to be a truly great public servant. I know each and every one of us will express our sadness, sympathy and condolences to his wife, Margaret, and his five children, Russell David, Ronald Arthur, Karen Elizabeth, Kathryn Lee and Roderick Paul. I was happy to be a colleague of Russ's. I really loved him very much and I know his family in the Soo will miss him forever.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I want to join with my colleagues in paying tribute to Russ Ramsay, an individual I respected very much and whom I considered to be a very good personal friend of all of us in the House. I certainly would like to place myself in that category.

I was chatting the other day with Margaret Marland, the member for Mississauga South, about a few years ago when there was more collegiality in this Legislature and when there were perhaps more personal friendships

between people in the government and the opposition. Russ Ramsay was certainly a person who had many people on his side, even on this side. I was going through some of the clippings about Russ in preparing for this today. One of them is from the London Free Press, March 17, 1983. The headline tells everything about Russ in this House. It says, "Ramsay Just Too Nice a Guy for the Opposition." What it was referring to was that the opposition critics in the field of labour, though they were critics and had a lot of issues to raise, found it was difficult to do so with Russ Ramsay as Minister of Labour. He was a hard person to take a personal shot or a political shot at because of his personality and warmth for all who were near him in any particular way.

I remember something about Russ: often outside of the Legislature people in their own community are known more for other things than their political representation. But Russ was known, as Norm Sterling said, as a person who found every problem that an individual constituent had, or anybody in the province had, to be important enough for Russ himself to reply to the concern that had been expressed. I remember he knew that I had an interest in hockey, and he also had an interest in hockey. Many years ago, as a youngster, I lived in the city of Sudbury—I was born there—and I remembered the old NOHA, the Northern Ontario Hockey Association, which was senior hockey actually at its best in those days. Russ had been very much involved in Sault Ste Marie with the Sault Ste Marie Greyhounds, as a broadcaster, a friend of the team, a supporter of the team. He took the opportunity one day to bring his scrapbooks from the old days of senior hockey down to the Legislature, to allow me to take them home for the weekend to have a look at them and recount many of the memories.

That was Russ Ramsay. He exemplified the kind of person you really want to see in politics, who was genuinely concerned about constituents, who didn't care what partisan stripe a person happened to have, who was prepared to deal with them on a person-to-person basis and to do the very best he could.

There are many quotes you find when you go back in the material, the headlines, the stories about a person. Invariably they refer to him as a nice individual. One of the quotes I remember by an individual in the Sault said, "Everybody loved Russ Ramsay and Russ Ramsay loved everybody else in the Sault." He would be very difficult to run against in an election campaign because of that kind of personality.

Norm Sterling said it appropriately when he said that should not detract from the fact that he was a very competent person. He wasn't simply a nice guy, which of course he was, but he was a very competent individual and very hard-working. The hours he spent on the job often took a toll on him. He looked tired some nights, as all of us do, but that was because Russ, both during the day sessions and the night sessions—we used to sit on Tuesday and Thursday nights at one time in this Legislature on a routine basis from 8 to 10:30, and then on a Friday morning—were here all of the time. He commuted back and forth to Sault Ste Marie. As the present member

for Sault Ste Marie knows, that isn't always easy to do, because it's some distance and the flights are not always what you would like them to be.

Russ Ramsay will be remembered by those of us who were in the House at that time, by those who were touched by him in some way or other, by the people of Sault Ste Marie, for what he did for the people of Sault Ste Marie but also for the people of Ontario.

I remember he did receive an appointment. You look at people and what they have contributed, and when Russ Ramsay left elected office, David Peterson appointed him to a position. He was named to the Ontario Health Disciplines Board. He was chair of the Ontario Health Disciplines Board and named by David Peterson. That was because everyone in the House, I think, felt he would do a good job. He would put his mind to it, he would spend the time. He had a genuine compassionate streak in him for the average individual in our society.

Sault Ste Marie, the province of Ontario and our country of Canada all are better places because Russ Ramsay was with us.

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): I am honoured and indeed feel privileged to speak today about my predecessor as member of provincial Parliament for Sault Ste Marie, Russ Ramsay. There are times when I stand in my place in this House and I'm overwhelmed by the awesome responsibility that comes with the position, the history embodied in every chair, and those who have served before: the likes of Arthur Wishart, John Rhodes and Karl Morin-Strom, but most particularly, and today especially, Russ Ramsay.

Russ Ramsay was a special personality in Sault Ste Marie, one who in many ways exemplified the best that society has to offer or aspires to. He was in many ways synonymous with Sault Ste Marie. He was a gentleman—and, more than a gentleman, a gentle man; father of five children—Russ Jr, Ron, Karen McAndrew, Kathy Campbell and Rod—and husband to Margaret.

It was fondly known by many that Russ paid exquisite attention to detail, to correspondence and, as Mr Sterling said, to responding to correspondence. He would often write a letter and, when you wrote back to thank him, he would quickly write back to thank you for thanking him. That was his style.

There were no boundaries or barriers, in my experience, with Russ Ramsay. He listened to and was interested in good ideas, wherever they came from, and gave of his time and wisdom generously. In his retirement years, I would see him holding court at his favourite table at the Grand Festa Restaurant with a cross-section of community members, keenly engaged, listening and giving advice. I was on occasion fortunate to be in that circle and to share stories, which always contributed to my greater appreciation and respect for this job, as Russ held it in high esteem and honoured with his wisdom and presence those who served in that capacity, without concern for political affiliation. Our good friend and long-time colleague of Russ, Bud Wildman, would often join us at that table.

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Russ was a tremendous community supporter. He loved sports and had an intense interest that he shared widely in every detail, every game, every personality and every important moment, particularly in Sault Ste Marie athletic history.

He served his community—our community—in many ways. Russ was honoured by the city in many ways. After serving as alderman for ward 2, elected in 1975, and running for mayor in 1996, he served as member of provincial Parliament from 1978 until 1985, where he was appointed labour minister and secretary for resource development by Premier Bill Davis.

The city renamed the civic centre's Algoma Boardroom, its largest and most significant meeting room, the Russ Ramsay Boardroom, and renamed Ferry Street as Russ Ramsay Way. A sports gallery in the Sault Ste Marie Museum was named the Russell H. Ramsay Sports History Hall of Fame in 1991. He received Sault Ste Marie's highest honour or award when he was honoured with the Medal of Merit in 1977. Recognition was given at this time for his having served as a member, director, president and chair of a host of organizations, including the Plummer Memorial Public Hospital, Sault Ste Marie Rotary Club, Sault Ste Marie Chamber of Commerce and the Sault Family YMCA.

Russ spent 30 years in the broadcasting industry—actually was the boss of Mr Spina over there, the member for Brampton today, and probably had an influence on his political career, given his connections—

Interjection: His proclivities.

Mr Martin: His proclivities, yes.

He served as general manager of Highland Radio and TV Ltd and Lake Superior Cable Vision. He was the play-by-play broadcaster for the Soo Greyhounds. He went on to work as executive vice-president and general manager of the Industrial Accident Prevention Association.

Elie Martel was reported to have said, on hearing of Russ's appointment to the IAPA, "If I could give him a present for Christmas, I'd like to give him a baseball bat. He is going to have to beat somebody into submission." Now, this would not have been Russ's style or choice of weapon, but I'm sure he would not have hesitated to tell someone, "If you don't like what I'm offering, be careful or Elie will get a hold of you." Elie, as his critic, served as an excellent foil for Russ as minister, and I'm sure they were a formidable team.

To give a measure of the character of the man, he is on record as opposing the elimination of the Workplace Health and Safety Board in 1995:

"I'm a strong supporter of what Premier Harris is doing concerning fiscal restraint, but I don't agree with what the government is doing on this. I think there would be significant benefits in retaining the agency. It has helped to reduce costly job accidents, increased productivity and made Ontario companies more competitive," said Ramsay, who has extensive experience in workplace safety issues."

Today we remember Russ Ramsay's contribution to public life in this province and to the people of Sault Ste Marie, and we celebrate it. We also express our sorrow at losing such a wonderful citizen, and express all that to his wife, Margaret, his five children, his 11 grandchildren and his two great-grandchildren.

The Speaker: I thank all the members for their kind comments and will ensure that copies of Hansard go to the family very shortly.

PHILIP SHRIVE

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): Mr Speaker, on a point of order: I would like to call for unanimous consent to observe a moment of silence for OPP Senior Constable Philip Shrive, whose funeral was held today in Renfrew. Constable Shrive succumbed to injuries on Friday, May 23, as a result of a two-vehicle collision on May 16 while serving his community and our province.

A dedicated officer who was well liked and respected by his peers and his community, he served as local branch president of the OPP association.

He will be greatly missed by his wife and children and by all those whose lives he has touched.

Could we have a moment of silence?

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Agreed? Agreed.

Would all the members and our friends in the gallery please rise for a moment of silence.

The House observed a moment's silence.

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to ask for unanimous consent for immediate second and third readings of the bill introduced today under the title Toronto Catholic Elementary Schools Stability and Good Will Promotion Act, 2003.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? I'm afraid I heard some noes.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Just before we begin question period—I probably shouldn't do this—Richard Brennan from the Toronto Star has said he would like members to know that Maya Gupta is shadowing him today. She's a grade 10 student from Iroquois Ridge High School. I was going to do it, as we sometimes have introductions—and I know we shouldn't do that. But Maya Gupta is following Richard Brennan of the Toronto Star today.

ORAL QUESTIONS

SARS

Ms Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): My question is for the Minister of Health, and involves a very serious issue.

Dr Donald Low said yesterday that your government closed the book on SARS prematurely. He said you didn't do all you could have to ensure we had actually beaten SARS. You didn't require hospital staff to continue wearing protective masks or hospitals to screen new patients and visitors for SARS symptoms. In short, the "new normal" became the old status quo. You became complacent, and now SARS is back.

It's clear that there are still many lessons to be learned here. Will you now agree to a full public inquiry so we can find out what went wrong and prevent another outbreak in the future?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Much as I hate to disagree with the honourable member, she's got her quotations completely incorrect when it comes to what Don Low said. If anything, he was referring to the medical community, and not to this government or any particular individual.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): It's not their fault.

Hon Mr Clement: Excuse me. This is not about finding fault; it's about correcting the record. Let's be accurate before we start hurling accusations back and forth about a public health issue.

I can tell you this: on May 2, the emergency committee sent a protocol to all hospitals respecting mask fitting, in which we indicated we had new forms of masks that were available and should be used; on May 6, we sent another letter to hospitals to ensure compliance; on May 12, we dealt with patient transfer procedures, making sure that procedures relating to transfers were adhered to. So I can tell you that right around the time of the flare-up—unbeknownst to us, of course—we were dealing with the protection of health care workers and the protection of patients. I, for one, was saying, "We cannot be letting our guard down," and unfortunately for all of us, that proved to be all too prescient.

Ms Pupatello: Ontarians need to trust the government and our health care system right now. With all the government policies in the last eight years, it's difficult to do that.

Here's why: funding to hospitals has been cut; you fired thousands of nurses and only offered part-time or casual jobs; you downloaded public health, and public health funding has decreased; you fired our public health scientists. Our health system has no surge capacity. That has been acknowledged publicly by people in the public health system. There's no surge capacity to deal with SARS because you've cut it to the bone. When it comes to SARS, both Dr Low and Dr Schabas say that after the World Health Organization lifted the travel advisory, you let the guard down.

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Minister, it's time for you to agree to a public inquiry so we can get to the bottom of this to find out what really went wrong. Our problem with your review of this is that you will not look at Conservative government policies that affected the health system to make it more difficult

to cope with a SARS outbreak. Will you have a public inquiry now?

Hon Mr Clement: As the honourable member knows, we have an independent panel, an expert panel, that is looking into all of the issues. But the honourable member is sewing a web into her allegations, which is not becoming to the honourable member. Indeed, the person she refers to in her statement was quoted as saying on May 27 that he didn't think there should be blame placed and didn't believe anyone let their guard down, the same Dr Richard Schabas who said that we were overcompensating at the beginning of this medical emergency.

We are quite willing to take some recommendations from Dr Schabas, just as we're quite willing to take recommendations from anyone who wishes to suggest them, but I would prefer to rely upon independent health officials like the World Health Organization, who said that Toronto has excellent experience in dealing with this outbreak, that they're well along in containing it, that it seems to be a setback. But they are quite appreciative of our efforts to get the information out and to deal with the issue. That's what the World Health Organization has said.

Ms Papatello: Concerns have been raised about your ministry's failure to provide health care workers with the early signs they needed to fight SARS. Your failure to properly fund hospitals forced one of the first SARS patients to lie on a stretcher in the ER for up to 12 hours, coming into contact with potentially hundreds of people instead of a few had he been moved into a room. Your refusal to hire full-time nurses meant that some of our health care workers unknowingly risked transmitting this disease as they travelled from job to job because we have not provided them with full-time work. There are serious questions about how the government's policies actually contributed to the spread of this outbreak.

I believe that your review will not do a review of how Conservative government policies contributed to this, and that's why we are asking so clearly for a public inquiry, so that you too and your policies will be called to the table for a review. I am asking you again: given that your new normal is looking a lot like the old status quo—people are still waiting in the ER for hours, nurses are still working part-time and casual instead of full-time in this province, our public health units are still not funded properly—will you—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I'm afraid the member's time is up. Minister of Health?

Hon Mr Clement: I must say I'm quite shocked by the honourable member's take on this issue. I wish to say directly to any health care workers or public health officials who are watching that we have confidence in them. We know they are trying to do the right thing for the people of Ontario. We know that Dr Young and Dr D'Cunha are trying to do the right thing.

I ask the honourable member—there's lots of time for campaigning; there's lots of time for electioneering; there are lots of issues that the people of Ontario will have their say on—please, let's work together. Let's work

together and defeat SARS and make sure some very sick people get healthy again. That's what I'm concentrating on.

EDUCATION LABOUR DISPUTE

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): I have a question for the Minister of Education. Minister, eight days ago, 69,000 kids were locked out of their classrooms the same day that your political party started doing ads on TV about its willingness not to have lockouts or strikes. In the interim, the minister has not supported peaceful solutions, and we are here today to give you an opportunity to do so, Minister.

We have proposed a normal bill that would bring stability and goodwill and put the kids back tomorrow morning. All I'd ask you to do is recommend to your colleagues that you drop the parts of your election platform that you poisoned this bill of yours with.

I think all the parents and the public out there whom you've inconvenienced with your lack of action and your attitude toward this want to know: are you in favour of a peaceful solution? Will you support our bill to put the kids back in school, while there can be a mediated or a negotiated solution?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Deputy Premier, Minister of Education): I find the member's remarks rather unbelievable. This member knows, more than anybody else, that when it comes to students in Ontario, when it comes to solving problems using peaceful means, I have worked very hard to ensure that our students have the opportunity to achieve success in the classroom. If you cared for the students in the classroom, as you profess, you would have passed this bill on day one.

Mr Kennedy: I and the other members, and the public watching, can detect a tone of defensiveness on the part of this minister, and she should be defensive. It's her government, where she has been a ranking member, that has lost the kids in the province 24 million days of study, four times the last two governments combined. Here we are on day 8 of this dispute and there's not one thing that you've done.

Presumably you counselled the Premier—the bill is in the Premier's name—and the bill brings in back-to-work terms that have never been seen in back-to-work legislation. Today there's another bill, and this bill looks a lot like other back-to-work legislation. It asks very plainly: are you in favour of the kids going back to school, or are you prepared to sacrifice your responsibility for education to the partisan political interests of the rest of your party? Which will it be, Minister?

Hon Mrs Witmer: I would repeat that this member's comments are just unbelievable. He professes to care about children. We have introduced legislation that would allow the teachers to go back to the classroom, legislation that has encouraged the teachers and the board to get back to the table. We believe it's important that they settle their differences. Our legislation also does what we believe parents and teachers want: our legis-

lation calls for teachers completing report cards, teachers participating in graduation ceremonies, teachers participating in co-op placement, teachers participating in testing and teachers participating in parent meetings. What do you have about teachers helping our students in the classroom?

Mr Kennedy: She's created the mess and now she blames us.

You created the mess, Minister. You're supposed to be an advocate in this House for the kids who are out there and not in school right now. Where are you today, Minister? You're hiding behind partisan lines, not willing to put these kids first. There is a bill here that has been passed by all three parties in the past. Your bill has 69,000 kids hostage to your political agenda, and apparently you're OK with that. Apparently that's what you want.

By the end of today, every parent, every student and everybody around is going to know whether you are prepared to put the kids first or whether the partisan agenda comes first. Again, will you agree to recommend to your colleagues to pass a clean bill that brings the kids back and maximizes stability and goodwill in their classrooms in the weeks to come? Will you do that, Minister?

1440

Hon Mrs Witmer: The member opposite knows full well that he and his colleagues—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order, please. The minister has the floor now. I apologize. Sorry, Minister.

Hon Mrs Witmer: The member opposite and his colleagues know full that they've had the opportunity now to get these students back into the classroom, as we have wanted to do ever since we introduced this bill.

Also, this member opposite is talking about his bill versus our bill. Well, there is a difference, and the public in the province of Ontario does have a clear choice between our legislation and their legislation. The Liberals would allow the union leaders to dictate that, even when in an illegal strike position, teachers can refuse—

Interjections.

The Speaker: This is the last warning for the member for Kingston and the Islands. If he continues, he will have to leave.

Sorry again for the interruption, Minister.

Hon Mrs Witmer: We believe it is important that teachers be allowed to do what they want to do, and that is, they want to make comments on report cards, they want to participate in testing, they want to participate in the graduation ceremonies, they want to participate in co-op placements and they, like the parents in this province, believe that is one of their duties.

HYDRO DEREGULATION

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Energy. Today, some of your friends at the Association of Major Power Consumers are complaining because their hydro rates are up

by 22% since deregulation. Deregulation, you said, was supposed to create jobs; instead, it's killing jobs. Another friend of yours, a columnist in the *Globe and Mail*, Eric Reguly, says that high hydro rates are one of the reasons DaimlerChrysler decided not to invest \$1.6 billion in Windsor.

Minister, will you move now and end hydro deregulation before more jobs are lost?

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs): It's quite interesting that on one day the member opposite and his union friends blame the lack of corporate welfare on the new loss of jobs at Chrysler, but others, including one of the individuals he mentioned, cited the skyrocketing Canadian dollar and its effect on investment in the province.

We certainly believe that we have to reform the electricity sector. That's why we took the route to change things to encourage more generation in Ontario, to open up the grid to green power and to have competition, which we believe will ultimately be in the best interests of the consumers of the province.

The record of this member opposite is no new power plants being constructed, his record is no plan to close our coal-fired plants, and his record was more debt at the former Ontario Hydro.

Mr Hampton: Minister, you've been singing that song for eight years. People don't see any new generation. They simply see the price of electricity going through the roof. I'll give you an example: River Gold Mines, despite the fact that the price of gold has gone up, lost \$1.1 million in the first quarter of this year. Why? River Gold Mines is very explicit. They say the problem is that their hydro bill has doubled since you implemented deregulation. Across northern Ontario, companies are asking why their hydro bill is double what it is for a similar company in Quebec—the pulp and paper industry, the sawmill industry, the mining industry, the refining industry.

How many people have to lose their jobs before you terminate hydro deregulation?

Hon Mr Baird: We brought forward legislation that had overwhelming support from both sides of the House to put prices back to where they were on May 1, while we brought on new generation. This leader and his party were the only ones to stand in the way of that important legislation, legislation that's been welcomed by small business, consumers and farmers right across Ontario.

The member opposite talks about the price of electricity. Let's look at this month. Just yesterday the weighted average was 3.32 cents, the day before it was 2.47 cents, and the day before that it was 3.75 cents. As new generation comes on line, like new green power, the new plant in Sarnia, a \$75-million investment on new, clean, non-emission Hydro plants, we're seeing a positive effect on price.

We could have chosen to do nothing and leave the old coal-fired plants open like his party. We could have chosen to do nothing and not embrace what is important to ensure that we have more generation built in the

province. I wish the member opposite would have taken the same concern for expenses of business and job creation when his government raised taxes more than 33 times when they were in office.

Mr Hampton: You and the Liberals thought that deregulation was going to be a wonderful thing. Now you and the Liberals believe that phony rate caps are going to cover up the problem. You know yourself that it has cost \$1.5 billion to finance those phony rate caps.

Go to Kenora: the Abitibi Consolidated paper mill has taken downtime because of hydro prices. Go to Dubreuil Forest Products: they've laid off because of hydro bills that have doubled. Go to Timmins and talk to Falconbridge about their refinery, which is going to take three months of downtime because they can't afford a hydro bill that's doubled. How much evidence do you need, from Wawa to Kenora to Dubreuilville to Timmins, or from DaimlerChrysler, that your strategy of hydro privatization and deregulation is killing jobs and is going to cause us to lose more jobs? How much evidence do you need before you see the light?

Hon Mr Baird: I think a fair examination of the challenges being faced in our natural resources sector—the member opposite could look to duties being imposed south of the border and the federal government's lack of action in that regard. They could look at the huge competition in the commodity of those industries of which he spoke. The members opposite don't even want to listen, because they know everything. They could look at the surge in the Canadian dollar.

Interjections.

Hon Mr Baird: They think the loss of jobs is funny. The member opposite is right.

Where were they when they were whacking corporate Canada? Where were they when they were stifling free enterprise for five long years when there was a loss of jobs, a loss of hope and a loss of opportunity? This side of the House is about unleashing the free enterprise, the spirit of the province of Ontario. Where was he?

Interjection.

Hon Mr Baird: The member from London talks about the social contract..

We brought forward some constructive initiatives, and we're starting to see some benefits of that process. I find it quite astonishing for the member opposite to talk about this.

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Education. Some very interesting things have happened at the Toronto Board of Education. First you appoint a Conservative political hack, and Chris Stockwell's campaign manager, to run the board, and then you bring in Ernie Eves's fundraiser Hugh Mackenzie to do the public relations and spin-doctoring over there, and then you start spending public money, taxpayers' money, on these blatant political ads which do nothing but manipulate our children and attack

our teachers. How do you justify your political hack at the Toronto Board of Education and Ernie Eves's political bagman spending education money on this disgusting political advertising?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Deputy Premier, Minister of Education): I think the leader of the third party should probably check some of the facts that he has just stated. I don't think they're quite accurate. I would just remind the member opposite that the reason we sent a supervisor to the Toronto Board of Education is because we felt it was really important when some of the trustees on the board of education chose to break the law and not pass a balanced budget. We've had a supervisor working at the Toronto board of education in order to ensure that we can provide stability to the students in the classroom and provide them with the best education possible.

1450

Mr Hampton: It's about this disgusting, crass political ad. It's about manipulating our children, and the teachers who are in the classroom teaching them, to promote your crass political agenda. That was the question, Minister.

The parents aren't fooled. They've already denounced your shameful manipulations at the Toronto board as, "A crass attempt to get re-elected." That's how they see it. Minister, there are 200,000 students; they are in the classroom. There are 11,000 teachers; they are in the classroom. Will you stop defending public school money being used to promote your crass political manipulation and state today that this won't happen again and that the money will be spent in the classroom where it belongs rather than on your crass political campaign?

Hon Mrs Witmer: The reason we sent a supervisor to the Toronto school board was to ensure that the money being flowed to the Toronto school board would indeed be spent on the students in the classroom and also to ensure that no matter what part of the city of Toronto you lived in, all the students would have access to equal funding and equal programs, which has not always been the case. I'm also pleased to indicate that I understand the board has announced today that they have a tentative deal with their secondary teachers. So obviously the negotiations that are taking place between the board and its teachers are going extremely well.

MEAT INSPECTION

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): Minister of Agriculture, consumer confidence is a key component of the agricultural industries in this province. Farmers and food processing industries work hard to ensure the product they send to market is safe. An important part of that safety process is your ministry's abattoir audit program. Under this program, the province's 204 licensed abattoirs are to be audited by veterinarians on contract with the ministry. Their job is to ensure that abattoirs are in compliance with the Meat Inspection Act, including safety regulations governing waste handling and disposal, water sanitation, equipment

and maintenance, pest control, temperature control and hygiene.

We have learned that no audits have been conducted since the end of March and none will be started again until close to the end of June, because after the private sector contract for these inspections ran out, you took your time to get the RFP process started. Minister, your failure to get the job done means that meat processing plants aren't being audited by veterinarians. That puts farmers and the public at risk. How can you explain your failure to ensure that these audits are being completed?

Hon Helen Johns (Minister of Agriculture and Food): I'm always surprised when the opposition comes forward in a time when we're having a crisis in agriculture to ask some question about agriculture. Let me remind you very clearly that we have done 1,000 tests to ensure we have food safety in the province. Of those 1,000 tests, we have tested every one to see if there is any indication of BSE in the animal, and there is no research that shows there is any BSE in the province. We have a huge food safety compliance issue. We've put more dollars into food safety; we're over budget for the last five years in the province. We have a strong surveillance program, we have a strong lab testing program and we have a strong training problem. Anyone who suggests differently is just wrong.

Mr Peters: Minister, you've obviously been sleeping at the switch. We want to instill confidence, and you're not instilling any confidence in the food industry in this province with an answer like that. I didn't ask you about BSE. I have a copy of the request for proposals that the ministry put out for the audit program for the food industry division. This RFP wasn't even issued until 15 May, a full six weeks after the veterinarians' contracts ran out at the end of June. The deadline for the submission isn't for another two weeks and the new agreements won't be executed until 23 June. Minister, that's three months before an audit or inspection will take place in an abattoir in this province—three of the busiest months of the year for our abattoirs, and they've gone without veterinary supervision which, as your own document states, may be required to deal with very significant food safety issues. I think it's important to add that these vets used to be OMAF positions before you privatized them in 1995. My sources are telling me that this RFP has sat on your desk for more than four months.

Why did you sit on your hands and jeopardize the safety of our food by allowing 204 abattoirs in this province to go without a veterinary audit for over a three-month period?

Hon Mrs Johns: You should be ashamed of yourself; you should be completely ashamed of yourself.

Let me say very clearly that we have a surveillance program in the province. When the animal goes down the killing line, the meat inspector looks at that animal and has the ability to call in a veterinarian any time they want to ensure that we know whether or not the animal should go through the line. We've also done more testing in this province in the last year than has ever been done in the

labs in the province. We've done 1,000 tests, and what we know from them is that there has been no indication of any BSE in our animals. Our research shows us we're safe and that we're doing more and more with food safety every year. We're doing more and more surveillance, lab testing and training in Ontario. If anyone suggests that our food safety program isn't the best in Canada, they're just wrong.

BSE

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): My question is for the Minister of Agriculture and Food as well. Minister, could you provide the members of the Legislature and the residents of Ontario with an update on the Canadian Food Inspection Agency's investigation into the case of BSE, or the mad cow disease, that occurred in the west last week?

Hon Helen Johns (Minister of Agriculture and Food): I'd like to say that the member has been very active in ensuring that his agricultural community is being represented and that he's bringing his views about this important issue to Queen's Park.

The agricultural community will want to know that 17 farms have been quarantined in the country; 12 in Alberta, three in BC and the balance in Saskatchewan. One of those herds has been depopulated already, and now we are working on 115 new cattle. They're being depopulated quickly so that we can test the tissue to ensure that they, like the first set, are BSE-free.

You might ask why this is so important. It is very important so that we can open the export market for this very important beef industry that we have. This is one of the largest segments of our agri-food business in the province and in the country, and it's imperative to all of us who represent rural ridings and care about agriculture that we move forward and get this done as quickly as we possibly can.

Mr Dunlop: Minister, could you provide an update on BSE prevention and surveillance programs and the activities you have undertaken in the past week to address the concerns of the agriculture industry here in Ontario?

Hon Mrs Johns: We spent a lot of the last week at OMAF ensuring that we have the right processes in place. We spent a lot of last week working with the Ontario Cattlemen's Association and the processors in Ontario to ensure that we're doing the right things for them. I have worked with the rendering industry over the last number of days to ensure that I support them in their quest of the federal government's funds for their industry so they can continue to do the important work that they do.

I have also ensured that the process is correct and I told you, in my last answer, that we have a surveillance program, a training program and a lab program to ensure that our food is safe. Surveillance hours in Ontario are up to 160,000 hours. We have also increased management and administration around that. We have done more lab

testing—1,000 tests. We have done more training to ensure that all the people who work in meat inspection are doing the right job and understand what they're to be doing.

1500

ADAMS MINE

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming-Cochrane): I have a question for the Minister of Natural Resources today. I want to ask you about your dirty little land deal at the Adams mine. The Deputy Premier assured me 20 days ago in this House that you would be shortly releasing the status of the 60-day review that the ministry is conducting. As of yet, you have not done so.

You were proposing to sell 2,000 acres at \$22 an acre to your largest campaign contributor, whose North Bay partner is a convicted tax evader, who ran up \$279,000 in tax arrears to the crown and whose ownership of the Adams mine is in legal contention before the courts. Now you have a counter-offer before you at \$30 an acre.

What is the status of this review? Who are you consulting with? With the ownership in dispute, just who would you sell it to?

Hon Jerry J. Ouellette (Minister of Natural Resources): We get requests in the Ministry of Natural Resources on a regular basis for these sorts of land acquisitions. This has gone through a normal process at the local office, and the member knows that very well. This was reviewed through an EA process in 1998 and all consultations were approved at that time. It's still under review by the local district office within the ministry, and once we receive the recommendations, we can look at what's going to be determined at that time.

Mr Ramsay: I'd like you to go back and check, because this never was posted on the EBR, as your local district office says.

There's a broader context to this whole sordid mess. The environment minister has continually acted as a promoter for this project, mentioning it at every possible opportunity. When the US border was temporarily closed last week, he put pressure on Toronto to come up with an emergency plan within 24 hours—again, promoting the Adams mine as an Ontario solution.

The minister does all of this while rejecting new technical data that show hydraulic containment at the site is questionable at best, meaning groundwater will be poisoned.

The minister's brother, Bill Stockwell Jr, asked for and received a large package of documents from Cortellucci concerning the Adams mine, and Mike Harris has been brought in to fix this situation.

This deal doesn't pass the smell test, and it never has. Will you confirm today that you're going to put a stop to this sale?

Hon Mr Ouellette: I refer the answer to the Minister of the Environment.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): By the way, Bill Stockwell is my father.

Firstly, I can only say to you with respect to the C of A on that land, when the environmental assessment was done it was part of the C of A approval that they acquire the land around the site.

With respect to the study that you speak about, I can only say to you that the study has been submitted to the Ministry of the Environment. We received it yesterday and will review it.

As far as promoting the site, I've not promoted that site one way or the other. All I can tell you is this: last week, with the mad cow disease issue that came forward, we were faced with a situation that we didn't have any place to put our garbage in the city of Toronto. I'm asking the local authorities at the regions of Peel, Durham, York and the city of Toronto that, should the border close due to an emergency, we need a better plan than having no place to take the garbage. All I've requested is that they put a plan together to deal with the garbage should the border be closed. If we didn't put that plan together and ask them to deal with that issue, you'd be jumping down our throats if the border were closed and there were no places to take the garbage.

I think any responsible government, any responsible Minister of the Environment should at least know that if the border is closed and we can't ship our garbage to Michigan, he's got a better answer for the people of the city of Toronto than, "Eat your garbage."

LITERACY

Mr AL McDonald (Nipissing): My question is for the Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services. Last month, you attended the launching of a newborn literacy kit for Ontario families at a Toronto library. Can you tell my constituents and this Legislature how this kit will help parents and their children?

Hon Brenda Elliott (Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services): I thank my colleague from Nipissing for this question. It's a very important question. The newborn literacy kit is part of our government's Early Years strategy. Our government believes that it's never too early to start reading to our children. We know that literacy and the very early skills of language are key factors for success, not only for childhood but for overall lifelong learning, so we want to do everything that we can to ensure that parents are their children's first and very best teachers.

So we've established a newborn literacy kit. These are going to be available through the Healthy Babies, Healthy Children's program. They will be distributed by public health nurses as they visit each new family and each new baby born in the province. It's one more way that we can say to the people of Ontario, the children and the families, that we know we want to make every effort to give their children the best start in life.

Mr McDonald: Thank you, Minister, and I want to thank you for your visit last July to the Early Years program for children in North Bay. You were well received, and they were thrilled to see you.

On April 1, I had the opportunity to visit the centre to help celebrate its first anniversary. Crystal Spiess, Cathy Chippa and their staff have done a remarkable job for parents and children in the north. My constituents appreciate the Ernie Eves government building on the early years strategy by initiating this new literacy kit. Minister, could you share with my constituents what is included in this kit?

Hon Mrs Elliott: I had a wonderful time visiting the Early Years centre. I remind my colleagues here in the House that 42 centres opened in the province of Ontario; 61 are about to open this year.

When I was in Nipissing, I saw a young dad reading to his child in one section of the Early Years centre. Of course, our goal is that not just the fathers but every single parent spend a great deal of time reading to their children. And so, in the newborn literacy kit, we have a wonderful book by a very famous Ontario author, called *Read Me a Book*. We have a passport of information for new parents, called *My Early Years*. We have a CD with nursery rhymes and little stories to be read and shared, and songs to be sung with the children. We have a video also, called *Precious Minds*. It was designed by the Kiwanis Club of Ottawa to help parents understand why it is so important to read to their children.

We believe it's very important to give children the very best start. The newborn literacy kit is one method of doing that.

HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): My question is to the Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation. I have a very serious question for you, actually. I want to know why you have abandoned the very people who make Toronto a great place to visit: our hospitality workers. Workers are facing a second wave of layoffs. Four thousand hotel workers and 12,000 restaurant employees have been fired or had their hours drastically reduced. They can't make ends meet. Some are facing eviction. Some have had their gas and hydro cut off.

Workers and industry have developed a plan that would involve all three levels of government to provide training during downtime. They need help now, and yet your government and the federal Liberals have done absolutely nothing for them. When will you provide the support that these workers desperately need, Minister?

Hon Jim Flaherty (Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation): As the member quite rightly states, the impact of SARS has been quite dramatic in the hospitality and accommodation industries in Ontario. My colleague the Minister of Tourism and I have been very actively involved, beginning with our initial meeting here at Queen's Park, followed by the meeting with the Chinese business associations at city hall in Toronto, at which time the federal government and the municipal government and the Chinese business associations asked

the province to take the initiative and coordinate the efforts that are being made.

Mr Gregory S. Sorbara (Vaughan-King-Aurora): What have you done?

Hon Mr Flaherty: Specifically to answer the member from Vaughan, of course we've gotten rid of the hotel accommodation tax, right through to September 30, to try to help the hotel industry in Ontario. I say "in Ontario," because the Niagara region has been significantly affected as well. Many people who visit Toronto also travel to Niagara.

So the member is absolutely right. This is a major challenge for us. We are helping out financially those folks who have been quarantined. So far, I must say it's been a co-operative effort, which is much appreciated.

Ms Churley: Minister, where have you been? All you've been doing is meeting with these folks. These workers already have a plan that we have been telling you about for weeks. They need action, not more meetings, and they get nothing from your government, absolutely nothing. And they got nothing from the federal Liberals in Ottawa either. They asked for the EI waiting period to be waived. They got nothing. They asked for protection from eviction and from having gas and hydro cut off. They got nothing. They want EI regulations relaxed so that they can apply. They got nothing. They want your government to support their plan for training during downtime. They got nothing.

These workers, Minister, are the heart and soul of our tourism industry, and they are in crisis. Are you going to throw them a lifeline or are you going to let them drown?

Hon Mr Flaherty: The key here of course is to revive the industry. The major initiative we have made is in our advertising and marketing, particularly around Ontario, around Canada and the United States. We're trying to encourage investors to be here. We had a group of investors here on Friday morning who are part of the CoreNet site locator group. This is vitally important to revive the economy, not only in Toronto but in all of southern Ontario, so that people can get back to work in the hospitality and tourism industries.

1510

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): My question is for the Minister of Education. Last October, your Hamilton school board supervisor claimed to have balanced the board budget, even to have identified surplus monies for classroom use. He then proceeded to proudly announce that no community schools would close.

Today, parents living in Dundas and area are stunned and outraged with your supervisor's plan to close five Dundas elementary schools and one Dundas high school. The decision of your supervisor is now tearing our Dundas community apart. Minister, I met with these parents. They tell me there must be sufficient time for study, consultation and deliberation before any Dundas

schools close. Instead of following the normal requirement of a six-month review, our area accommodation committee has been given only six weeks to make decisions as to which schools will close. Sadly, your supervisor has stated that given a possible provincial election, he's even prepared to "hyperspeed this decision" to ensure his school-closing plan is implemented. Clearly this is not in the best interests of Dundas students.

Minister, will you stand in your place today and do the right thing? Will you intervene by declaring a moratorium on the closing of any Dundas school or, failing that, immediately act to ensure my constituents the time and information required to—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I'm afraid the member's time is up.

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Deputy Premier, Minister of Education): As the member has pointed out, there is an ongoing school revitalization plan in the Hamilton-Wentworth community. The supervisor in the community has worked extremely hard. He has done extensive consultation with parents and educational stakeholders. Part of that process is to take a look at where new schools are going to be required for growing parts of the board. Also, at the same time, of course, part of that revitalization plan is to take a look at areas where obviously there may need to be some school closings, maybe some amalgamation of schools.

I can tell the member opposite that this is being done in a way that does encourage full consultation with parents in order to give them the opportunity to make the representation and make their case known.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): There are three schools in my riding that are scheduled to be closed. One of those, Woodward Elementary, is actually a school that is over capacity. Last night there was a meeting, and parents expressed their raw feelings, their emotions, their passion toward keeping that school open. Minister, you don't get that. You don't understand that closing these schools is ripping the heart out of our communities. It is not simply a building; it is a community centre, a centre where people go, where kids play after school. You are taking that away from some of the poorest neighbourhoods in the city of Hamilton because of your flawed funding policy.

The reality is this: the fix is in. It's a done deal. Your supervisor, under your marching orders, is going to close those schools in my riding, is going to close those schools in Dundas, is going to close those schools in West Hamilton. That is wrong. You've only implemented one third of the Rozanski formula to date. Will you today freeze all school closures until you've fully implemented the Rozanski funding formula for the city of Hamilton?

Hon Mrs Witmer: What the members opposite fail to realize is that the entire issue of school accommodation reviews has been taking place since the 1980s. In fact, under the Liberal government of David Peterson, 1985 to 1990, 184 schools were closed. Between 1991 and 1995, 134 schools were closed. During that same time period, 1985 to 1990—

Interjections.

Hon Mrs Witmer: Folks, this is no different. School closings and new school openings have always been the responsibility of local school boards. They do this in consultation with the people in the community, and they make the decision based on what's in the best interests of the students. School closings and openings have always occurred. Due process takes place and decisions are made.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): My question as well is to the Deputy Premier and Minister of Education. In 1984, the Liberals pledged to restore funding to a minimum of 60%, on average, across the province within five years. Yet by 1990, when the Liberals were voted out of office, the level of provincial funding stood at a mere 40%, more than six percentage points lower than it was in 1985 when the Liberals took power. Similarly, the NDP made the same promise but never funded education to the level they said they would. Like the Liberals, the NDP were unsuccessful at keeping their education promise, only ever reaching about 52%.

I know that since our government took office we have made many changes to the system to ensure quality and fairness by introducing our student-focused funding formula. Recently, Dr Mordechai Rozanski undertook a review of the formula, as the Premier promised. Can you please tell the House what the Eves government has done to follow through on its commitment to implement Dr Rozanski's recommendations?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Deputy Premier, Minister of Education): The member opposite is correct, we have moved forward in a way to recognize that all students in this province deserve equal funding, no matter whether they live in the north, the south, the rural or the urban part of our province.

We did ask Dr Rozanski to do a review of the funding formula. He confirmed that the funding formula was working. He also made recommendations for additional allocations of money, and I'm very pleased to say that of the \$1.8 billion he recommended—within the first three days we allocated an additional \$610 million to the students of Ontario for teachers' salaries and transportation, and we said we would make available \$250 million for special education.

Mr Dunlop: It's obvious our government has continued to maintain a strong commitment to quality education in Ontario. People like Dave McDonald, chair of the Upper Canada District School Board, have affirmed our government's strong commitment to Dr Rozanski and to education as a whole. Mr McDonald said, "The government was quick off the mark to put Dr Rozanski's recommendations in place."

In his report, Dr Rozanski highlights the funding formula as being fair and equitable, which is something I know is important to the people in my riding of Simcoe North and of course to all the people across our province.

I also know that this government has raised education spending by record amounts every year. I would like my constituents and people across Ontario to know what the Ernie Eves government is committing to education overall this year and to my local school boards in the riding of Simcoe North and the county of Simcoe.

Hon Mrs Witmer: Dr Rozanski recommended \$1.8 billion, as I said. We are going to be investing \$2 billion. We have made that commitment over the next three years. This compares to the commitment by the Liberals of \$1.6 billion. I'm very pleased to say that this year, 2003-04, we are going to be investing a record \$15.3 billion to help students in Ontario achieve success. This is an increase over last May of \$1.1 billion. That is nearly 8%, while enrolment at the present time is decreasing by 2%. We appreciate the hard work of our teachers. We appreciate that this money is helping them to help our students achieve success.

CHILDREN'S HEALTH SERVICES

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): My question is to the Minister of Health. An article in the Ottawa Citizen today reports on a study published by the Canadian Medical Association Journal, which looked at survival rates of patients who were undergoing complex surgical procedures in both large regional hospitals and local hospitals. The study concludes that it is erroneous to assume that placing some complex procedures in larger hospitals reduces deaths. This article made the link between these findings and your government's decision to consolidate all pediatric cardiac surgery in Toronto.

1520

As you will know, maintaining pediatric cardiac surgery at CHEO in Ottawa remains a major issue and concern for the people of eastern Ontario. They want to know that program will be staying in the city.

Minister, your government placed full-page partisan ads in three Ottawa daily newspapers on May 17 regarding your government's commitment to the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario. The information contained in the ads was nothing new. All the information was released on April 28. Why shouldn't your party be paying for these kinds of partisan ads that are totally redundant to the news release and the media coverage?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I'm not well versed in all the ins and outs of Management Board guidelines on advertising, so I'll actually answer—

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Well, I've got the guidelines, and they violate them.

Hon Mr Clement: I guess the issue is closed then. The honourable member for St Catharines has already revealed his judgment on the issue. Thank you.

I do want to talk about actual issue that underlies this, if I might, to the honourable member. I think the critical phrase he used—and I agree with the phrase—is it would be “erroneous to assume.” I agree with the honourable member that one should not assume anything when it

comes to what procedures should be done where in the hospital system; one should base it on evidence. I would be pleased to run through the type of research that has been done in the answer to a supplementary.

Mr Patten: Minister, you didn't really answer the question about your party paying for those ads.

The basis of the evidence was a completely Toronto-centred model of moving everything to one centre. It was a managerial problem. It was not based on medical evidence of quality at all, and you know damned well that that's the case.

Before the last election in 1999, the previous Minister of Health promised the people from London that their children's hospital would not lose its specialty services. What happened? Two years later they lost them to Toronto. Why should the people in Ottawa or eastern Ontario believe now, just prior to an election, that you're not just going to snow them and say, “We're going to review this.”

I know you know it's a big issue in Ottawa. Let me tell you it will be an election issue in Ottawa, because the people there know that service should stay there. Will you make a commitment today to keep that service in Ottawa and not try to find a face-saving device and say, “We'll do a review,” and then after the election bring the service to Toronto?

Hon Mr Clement: I guess I'll continue with the thread of my answer and indicate to this House the research that has been done on these very important issues on how best to ensure that pediatric cardiac surgeries done in Ontario are done the right way: In March 1997, the HSRC provincial pediatric task force reported; in November 2001, the Specialized Pediatric Service Review Committee; in May 2002, Dr Wilbert Keon's independent review of the work of SPSRC; then there was the Manitoba Sinclair report; CIHI's report, “Health Care in Canada 2001”; Dr Hannan's “Pediatric Cardiac Surgery: The Affect of Hospital and Surgeon Volume on In-Hospital Mortality”; and Dr Williams also published a report. Dr Jenkins published a report on in-hospital mortality as well.

As you can see, we've done a lot of research. That research should be put into the mix as well as the research we're doing right now.

PATIENT TRANSFERS

Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington): My question is for the minister responsible for long-term care. On April 4 this year, 87 frail, elderly seniors were abruptly taken from their residence at the Oakville Lifecare Centre in one of the winter's most severe storms. Residents and family members were justifiably angry, frustrated and confused at the government's decision.

In a letter dated April 2, your ministry indicated, “This was done in order to provide a centralized location where potential SARS contacts can be isolated and observed if required.” Less than 48 hours later, another letter was sent, on April 4, contradicting that, saying that it was not

due to SARS. In fact, it was done in order to make room for ALC—alternate level care—patients who were resident in this facility, to make room for other nursing-home-bound residents. Two residents died during this transfer.

I have asked the minister in a letter if he can explain, once his officials determined the facility was no longer needed for the SARS outbreak, why he put the residents at risk by directing an unnecessary transfer of these frail, elderly seniors.

Hon Dan Newman (Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I want to thank the member for Burlington for his question. The transfer of patients from Oakville Lifecare back in April was part of our government's initial response to SARS. Facilities like Oakville Lifecare helped patients who no longer required the care of a hospital and who had not been exposed to SARS to move to a more appropriate health care setting. This was done so that hospitals in the greater Toronto area could deal with the increased stress on the system due to SARS. Alternative level of care or ALC patients from GTA hospitals were transferred to Oakville Lifecare as part of this strategy. To date, 67 ALC patients have been transferred to Oakville Lifecare.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the residents and their families for their understanding and for their assistance in helping Toronto deal with the original SARS crisis. I would also like to commend the staff at Oakville Lifecare who have shown tremendous professionalism and tremendous compassion during this time.

Mr Jackson: All of this doesn't explain why officials mass-moved 87 people in one of the worst storms of the year. Of the families I've talked to, in many cases they were given less than half a day's notice that their parents were being removed from this location. What concerns me is that 33 residents of Oakville, in the Speaker's riding, were transferred to the Brantwood centre in Burlington where there were 33, obviously, empty beds. The Oakville Lifecare Centre was so quickly vacated it sat vacant for an entire week. Yet, a week later, the government then made a decision to take 33 people out of the Burlington hospital and send them to Oakville. This was a completely unnecessary step, I submit to the minister.

My question then is, what steps has this minister taken to ensure that this kind of unnecessary transfer, that put frail, elderly senior citizens at risk, will never happen again in this province, as we wait for the coroner's inquest?

Hon Mr Newman: I want to say today that residents were transferred out of Oakville Lifecare as part of our government's response to SARS. As I mentioned, 67 ALC patients have been transferred to Oakville Lifecare to help relieve pressures on GTA hospitals dealing with the initial SARS outbreak.

Of course, our first priority is always the residents, and we appreciate their understanding and their co-operation throughout this time. All of the residents in Oakville Lifecare were immediately given priority place-

ment in a facility of their choosing, and many of the residents have been placed in a nursing home of their choice. The ministry will continue to work with the residents and continue to work with their families until each and every resident is in their preferred long-term-care facility.

The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has also met regularly with the residents and their families to discuss their questions and to address their concerns face to face. As well, ministry staff have personally addressed questions and concerns regarding this transfer.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Pursuant to standing order 37(a), I wish to advise you of my dissatisfaction with the response of the Minister of Agriculture to my question today. I have filed the appropriate papers with the table.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I think the member said he has filed them, but just to remind him, he must do that.

PETITIONS

ONTARIO DISABILITY SUPPORT PROGRAM

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain): I have a petition I am pleased to present.

"Whereas the Harris-Eves government has neglected the needs of people with disabilities in Ontario;

"Whereas people with disabilities in Ontario are forced to live below the poverty line;

"Whereas Ontario disability support program rates have been frozen since 1993 and have never been increased under the current government;

"Whereas clawbacks and punitive regulations prevent the disabled and their families from any opportunity of escaping poverty;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to ensure that benefit levels of ODSP recipients are not eroded by inflation by providing annual cost-of-living adjustments and to remove barriers that prevent persons with disabilities from improving their circumstances."

I proudly sign this petition.

1530

NATIONAL CHILD BENEFIT SUPPLEMENT

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): I have a petition here this afternoon, "Stop the Clawback," with about 160 names from North Bay, Kingston, Brampton—

Interjection: Everywhere.

Mr Martin: Everywhere.

"Whereas one in five children in Ontario live in poverty;

"Whereas, as part of the national child tax benefit program the federal government gives a supplement to low-income families across the country to begin to address child poverty;

"Whereas that money, up to approximately \$100 a month per child, is meant to give our poorest and most vulnerable children a better chance in life;

"Whereas in Ontario the Conservative government deducts the child benefit supplement dollar for dollar from those living on social assistance;

"Whereas this is leaving our province's neediest children without extra money they desperately need to begin to climb out of poverty;

"Whereas all children are entitled to a fair chance at life;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to demand that the provincial government of Ontario stop the clawback of the national child tax benefit supplement and ensure this federal money reaches all low-income families in Ontario."

I sign my signature.

HOG INDUSTRY

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell):

I have a petition that came from Kelly Leblanc and concerned citizens of the Fournier area.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, as citizens of Glengarry, Prescott-Russell, are opposing the industrial hog factories planned for the area within the nation municipality, of Pendleton, Ste-Rose-de-Prescott and St Albert;

"Whereas similar hog factories are not permitted in Quebec;

"Whereas farms are an essential component of our rural communities and must be protected;

"Whereas establishment of mega hog factories is incompatible with the preservation of our rural communities and our quality of life in Glengarry and the United Counties of Prescott and Russell and surrounding areas;

"Whereas establishment of mega hog factories is also incompatible with the protection of farms;

"Whereas Ontario is still addressing environmental laws and health issues associated with industrial hog factories and the spraying of pig manure;

"Whereas the South Nation River water pollution concerns are not yet resolved;

"Whereas an environmental assessment of aquifer and groundwater have not been done;

"Whereas local residents rely on wells or the water from the South Nation River situated along the proposed hog factory in Pendleton;

"Whereas waste/sewage from pigs potentially endanger the water supply and soil;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To ensure the safety of the citizens of Glengarry and the United Counties of Prescott and Russell will be protected against the known dangers associated with industrial hog factories. We petition you to immediately, before construction of farms in Pendleton, Ste-Rose-de-Prescott and St Albert, conduct an environmental study of the area to ensure there will be no detrimental effects to our health, our safety and our properties as a result of the construction of the proposed industrial hog factories."

I also add my signature to the petition.

COMMUNITY CARE

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a petition that's been signed by thousands of people who live in Kingston and area that was sent to me by Cheri Dobbs, who is the national representative for CUPE, out of the Kingston area office. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the eastern Ontario branch of the Victorian Order of Nurses has been providing care to this community since 1897;

"Whereas community care will suffer by the closure of the eastern Ontario branch of the VON;

"Whereas community care in Napanee, Northbrook, Sharbot Lake and Cloyne will be drastically affected by the closure of the eastern Ontario branch of the VON;

"We, the undersigned, implore the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to recommend to the Ontario government that the necessary funds be provided to the community care access centre to ensure that the VON are able to maintain their community nursing programs."

I agree with the petitioners and I sign my signature to this as well.

WEST NIPISSING GENERAL HOSPITAL

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming-Cochrane): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas a decision has been made to remove the interim beds at the West Nipissing General Hospital in Sturgeon Falls:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Let's keep our seniors here!

"We, residents and taxpayers of the municipality of West Nipissing, endorse our municipal council in a combined effort to lobby the Ministry of Health to retain the interim beds at the West Nipissing General Hospital in Sturgeon Falls pending a permanent solution to better serve our population."

I will append my signature to this.

MINIMUM WAGE

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): I have a petition to the Parliament of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the minimum wage in Ontario has not been adjusted since 1995; and

"Whereas at the current rate of \$6.85 per hour, an employee working full-time based on a 40-hour week would earn only \$14,248 per year, a sum that falls well below Statistics Canada's low-income cut-off (LICO) line of \$16,640, which is the amount required for basic human necessities;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to raise the minimum wage to meet the LICO line, which is \$8 per hour, and that the minimum wage be indexed to reflect the annual rate of inflation."

It is signed by approximately 1,000 people. I am in agreement and affix my signature thereto.

NIAGARA HOSPITALS

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the board of trustees for the Niagara Health System and the Hotel Dieu Hospital have unanimously endorsed a plan to construct a new general hospital and regional cancer centre and new Hotel Dieu Hospital on existing Hotel Dieu property in St Catharines; and

"Whereas the proposed new hospitals would replace currently insufficient facilities and improve the quality of health care in St Catharines and throughout the region of Niagara; and

"Whereas the proposal will streamline operations and save an estimated \$10 million annually; and

"Whereas health care professionals in Niagara support the proposal of the Niagara Health System; and

"Whereas the construction of two new hospitals would attract new health care professionals to Niagara to help alleviate the shortage of medical professionals the Niagara region is currently experiencing;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the Ontario Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to immediately support the proposal of the Niagara Health System for the construction of two new hospitals in St Catharines on the existing Hotel Dieu property and provide the appropriate funding to make this project a reality."

I affix my signature to this petition.

HOME CARE

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the Conservative government has greatly restricted the eligibility criteria for Hamilton home care clients, causing drastic reductions in the amount, duration and quality of services available to frail, sick and elderly people in their homes; and

"Whereas home care clients deserve the provision of adequate government funding for home care services as

their needs grow increasingly complex in the face of continued government cutbacks to home care; and

"Whereas the Conservative government shifted the costs of home care services on to the backs of the most vulnerable people in our communities; and

"Whereas home care services are more cost-efficient for the health care system because they are dedicated to serving families in their homes so that more costly institutional care can be prevented or delayed;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Conservative government review and change the criteria eligibility so that appropriate home care services can be provided to the most vulnerable in our community when the need arises."

I support these petitioners from my riding and I add my name to the petition.

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): To the Legislative Assembly:

"Whereas well-managed and adequately funded home health care is a growing need in our community; and

"Whereas the provincial government has frozen community care access centre budgets, which has meant dramatic cuts to service agency funding and services to vulnerable citizens, as well as shortened visits by front-line workers; and

"Whereas these dramatic cuts, combined with the increased complexity of care for those who do qualify for home care, has led to an impossible cost burden to home care agencies; and

"Whereas the wages and benefits received by home care workers employed by home care agencies are well below the wages and benefits of workers doing comparable jobs in institutional settings; and

"Whereas front-line staff are also required to subsidize the home care program in our community by being responsible for paying for their own gas and vehicle maintenance; and

"Whereas other CCACs and CCAC-funded agencies across the province compensate their staff between 29 cents and 42.7 cents per kilometre; and

"Whereas CCAC-funded agency staff in our own community are paid 26 cents per kilometre, with driving time considered 'hours worked';

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To act now to increase funding to the CCAC of Kingston, Frontenac, Lennox and Addington in order for it to adequately fund service agencies so they can fairly compensate front-line workers."

I'm very happy to assign my signature to this petition. I will hand it to Sarah, the page, who is from my riding of Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington.

1540

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): I have a further petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the provincial Conservatives created the Education Equality Task Force and appointed Dr Mordechai Rozanski to review and make recommendations regarding education funding in Ontario; and

"Whereas Dr Rozanski's report, Investing in Public Education, confirmed what parents, students, custodial staff and teachers already knew, that the education system has been suffering greatly since the Conservative government started cutting education funding in 1995; and

"Whereas Dr Rozanski's report confirmed that elementary and secondary school education has been underfunded by \$2 billion under the Conservatives; and

"Whereas the Conservatives made a series of announcements and re-announcements following Rozanski's report, they have yet to table a plan to fully implement its recommendations;

"Therefore be it resolved that the Conservative government should immediately commit to implementing all of Dr Rozanski's recommendations and start flowing funding to school boards accordingly so that every Ontario student is given the opportunity to succeed and every Ontario school can be an excellent school" and that all inner-city schools may remain open.

I'm proud to add my name to those of these petitioners from Hamilton.

HIGHWAY 69

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): Another tragic weekend on Highway 69, so I reluctantly have to read this petition into the record.

"Whereas modern highways are economic lifelines for the north; and

"Whereas the stretch of Highway 69 from Sudbury south to Parry Sound is a treacherous road with a trail of death and destruction; and

"Whereas the carnage on Highway 69 has been staggering; and

"Whereas the Harris-Eves government has shown gross irresponsibility in not four-laning the stretch of Highway 69 between Sudbury and Parry Sound; and

"Whereas immediate action is needed to prevent more needless loss of life; and

"Whereas it is the responsibility of any government to provide safe roads for its citizens, and the Harris-Eves government has failed to do so;

"Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to urge the Harris-Eves government to begin construction immediately and four-lane Highway 69 between Sudbury and Parry Sound so that the carnage on Death Road North will cease."

I affix my signature to this petition, and give it to Mario, our page from Thunder Bay, to bring to the table.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition that reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas long-term-care facilities in this province are understaffed, underfunded and ignored by the current government;

"Whereas many residents of St Catharines and of other communities in Ontario are unable to find a family doctor as a result of the growing doctor shortage we have experienced during the tenure of the Harris-Eves government;

"Whereas cancer patients in Ontario requiring radiation treatment face unacceptable delays and are often forced to travel to other jurisdictions to receive medical attention;

"Whereas many prescription drugs which would help patients with a variety of medical conditions such as macular degeneration, multiple sclerosis, arthritis, diabetes and heart failure are inadequately covered by OHIP;

"Whereas long waiting lists for diagnostic tests such as MRIs, CT scans and ultrasounds are jeopardizing the health of many individuals already facing serious illness;

"Whereas the Harris-Eves government has now spent \$401 million on blatantly partisan government advertising in the form of glossy brochures, television and radio ads and full-page newspaper ads;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the Conservative government of Ernie Eves to immediately end their abuse of public office and terminate any further expenditure on political advertising and to invest this money into health and long-term care in the province of Ontario."

I affix my signature because I'm in complete agreement with the contents of this petition. I hand it to Kristian, who is a page just beginning this week at Queen's Park.

NOTICES OF DISSATISFACTION

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Pursuant to standing order 37(a), the member for Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to her question concerning rights information for children in care given by the Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services.

Similarly, pursuant to standing order 37(a), the member for Elgin-Middlesex-London has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question concerning veterinary audits of provincial abattoirs given by the Minister of Agriculture and Food.

These matters will be debated at 6 o'clock this evening.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BACK TO SCHOOL (TORONTO CATHOLIC ELEMENTARY) AND EDUCATION AND PROVINCIAL SCHOOLS NEGOTIATIONS AMENDMENT ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 PRÉVOYANT LE RETOUR À L'ÉCOLE (SECTEUR ÉLÉMENTAIRE DU CONSEIL CATHOLIQUE DE TORONTO) ET MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'ÉDUCATION ET LA LOI SUR LA NÉGOCIATION COLLECTIVE DANS LES ÉCOLES PROVINCIALES

Mr Clark moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 28, An Act to resolve a labour dispute between the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association and the Toronto Catholic District School Board and to amend the Education Act and the Provincial Schools Negotiations Act / Projet de loi 28, Loi visant à régler le conflit de travail opposant l'Association des enseignantes et des enseignants catholiques anglo-ontariens et le conseil scolaire de district appelé Toronto Catholic District School Board et modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation et la Loi sur la négociation collective dans les écoles provinciales.

Hon Brad Clark (Minister of Labour): I stand in support of the Back to School (Toronto Catholic Elementary) Education and Provincial Schools Negotiations Amendment Act, 2003. When I previously addressed the members on this matter, I spoke of fairness. Today I'd like to expand on that subject, if I may.

The act before us not only seeks to establish fairness between teachers and school boards but, more importantly, seeks to treat students fairly. As Minister of Labour, my role can be seen as limited to supporting balanced, stable, productive labour relations. I'm also a parent and a legislator, and in these roles I know we have a responsibility to the children of our province to ensure that we provide an education system that will prepare them for the world they face, and an education system that will give them the opportunity to make the most of their talents and efforts.

When our children begin their first day of school, we make an implicit promise to them. We tell them that if they try hard and do their best, we will provide them with an education that will secure a future for them in which they can achieve their potential.

So who are the "we" who make this promise? We are all of us in this House. We are all the adults in the province. We are the parents who send their children to school with anticipation of accomplishment. We are parents who sit at the table to help our children with their homework. We are taxpayers who fund the education system and expect it to provide what we are paying for. We are the citizens of this province who democratically elect the members of this House and who recognize that a

well-educated citizenry is fundamental to the working of this democracy. We are all of us in this House, and we cannot let our children down. This act is keeping that promise to our children.

Every day of our children's education is precious. It is a day that can never be recovered or redeemed. To allow a labour dispute between adults to stand in the way of an unrecoverable day is unconscionable. Since 1985, almost 1,000 teaching days have been lost to labour disputes—1,000 days, almost three years. There is no way to calculate the thousands of children who have been affected by adults who can't settle their disputes like adults. Isn't it time for a new maturity to be attained in our education relations system?

It is not only lockouts and strikes that have been standing in the way of our promise to our children. This act also seeks to protect our students from the effects of harmful work-to-rule actions by clarifying the duties of the teachers. Regulations under the Education Act have been amended to clarify that teachers' duties include ensuring that report cards are fully completed with comments and grades; co-operating and assisting in the administration of tests under the Education Quality and Accountability Office Act, 1996; participating in regular meetings with students and parents; performing duties as assigned by the principal in relation to co-operative placements of their students; and performing duties normally associated with the graduation of students.

These are all matters that we expect of our education system. These are all matters that our children deserve. The act is a first step in achieving a new framework for labour peace in the education system in the province of Ontario.

1550

This act is a first step in keeping our promise to our children. It is a first step. It achieves our first priority of safeguarding our children's education.

This act ensures that students in the Toronto Catholic schools are able to complete their studies without the threat of school year disruptions because of strikes, lockouts or so-called work-to-rule campaigns. But this act can only achieve that first priority if it is also fair to teachers and to school boards.

The immediacy of passing this act is now. It's being precipitated by the dispute between the Toronto Catholic District School Board and their teachers that is resulting in more than 69,000 students being out of school. They belong in the classroom.

The dispute in Toronto is not the first, and it is not the only one. There have been others in the past, and if we don't act, there will be others in the future. We need new ways of dealing with these disputes.

Work-to-rule campaigns are destructive to an education in which parents and students are kept informed of the student's progress. Work-to-rule keeps parents and students in the dark. Work-to-rule hurts a well-rounded education.

Over the past few years, we've seen labour fight after labour fight in one board or another, and at each and

every one of these, they have damaged the children in Ontario. They have impaired relations between the teachers in the classroom, who are eager to do their very best, and the elected board members, who are eager to do their very best.

If passed, this bill will provide a fair, balanced approach to the situation at the Toronto Catholic District School Board. It will be the first step in actions to lead to better labour relations at boards throughout the province of Ontario.

This bill will take nothing from boards and unions in terms of their ability to achieve an agreement on their own, except it will take away the ability to disrupt the classroom.

This bill would say to boards and unions, "Please come to an agreement that serves the interests of the children in your area."

This government believes that the best solution is a local one, where the board and the union achieve a mutually acceptable and responsible settlement. We would not be here today if the Toronto Catholic board and its union had been able to achieve such a settlement.

In striving to bring about a settlement, the Ministry of Labour provided mediation services and met numerous times with negotiating parties. This government has done what it can. Now it will do what it must.

This bill would allow the school board and the union to continue to negotiate toward a fair settlement by giving the parties seven days in which to reach a mutually acceptable agreement. That's fair. That's reasonable.

If the school board and the union are unable to resolve their differences, then they have the opportunity to agree to a mediator-arbitrator. That's fair and that's reasonable. Only if they are unable to agree would the Minister of Labour appoint one. That's fair and that's reasonable.

Until a new agreement is reached, the terms and conditions of employment would remain those that have already been passed in the previous collective agreement. That's fair and that's reasonable.

We want the parties at all school boards to reach an agreement to achieve a quick ending to any labour negotiations that are underway. We want school boards and their employees to be able to negotiate fair and reasonable contracts.

We have already invested almost \$700 million to provide 6% increases to teacher salary benchmarks over two years. We've passed legislation requiring three-year contracts between teachers' unions and school boards. We need to be enthusiastic. We need to have teachers who are willing to work in the classrooms to deliver that promise to our children.

This act is about balancing the interests of teachers and boards. This bill tells our children that we believe in them and we will act in their interests.

I have continually encouraged members of this House to support this legislation. We've made that promise to our children, and I urge them to keep that promise. But unfortunately, this bill has got caught up in politics, and it's shameful that it has occurred.

I'm going to point out some of the politics that have actually occurred just in the last few days. The first thing that occurred, which startled me and probably many members of this House, was when members of the opposition, the Liberal Party, accused the Catholic board of collusion. They accused the Catholic board of somehow being puppets for the government of Ontario, of some type of conspiracy. I was shocked, because I was under the impression that Mr Carnevale was a member of the Liberal Party.

Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa West-Nepean): Always was.

Hon Mr Clark: He is and was a member. He's a vice-president of a riding association. Yet here we had members of the Liberal Party attacking him publicly for some type of conspiracy. I wondered what Mr Carnevale would be saying about this.

Here's what he said on CFRB just a few days ago, on May 22: "You know, it's really unfortunate that people spin those types of rumours and conspiracy theories. The truth is we have 12 trustees, including myself, that work very hard, who were elected by our local constituents to do the" very, very "best we can for our students, and to suggest anything other than that is really a slap in the face of not only these trustees but everyone who voted for us. Really unfortunate, completely unfounded."

Ted Woloshyn asked, "Are you disappointed...?" He cut him off and said, "I am, and I've expressed that to Dalton McGuinty over the phone. I told him that ... you know, the fact that he's got some caucus members saying these things is really unfortunate. I would hope that he deals with that at a different level."

Ted Woloshyn: "In the meantime you're dealing with" these issues that are important to your community and to the people.

Carnevale: "Exactly."

Ted Woloshyn said, "The only reason I even bring that up is because it has been bandied about in the news"—that there's a conspiracy. Mr Carnevale said, "And you know what? The honest truth is I want to get a settlement here. I'll deal with those types of issues after we get a settlement, because this is my first priority."

There's a man with his priorities. He didn't bite to the conspiracy theory of the members opposite. He spoke to it—he ignored it and said, "I'm going to get a settlement." A reasonable man, and someone whom I would have respect for because of what he's doing.

Gerard Kennedy is quoted in the paper as saying that he's a well-known Conservative and that he's a lobbyist for the board. He raises Guy Giorno, a Tory strategist. He said, "It's all coincidence. This is a conspiracy. Clearly the Tories told him what to do."

Then Mr Carnevale says in the Toronto Sun, in Christina Blizzard's column, "Gerard Kennedy is completely out to lunch. He is grasping at straws. I think he needs to somehow argue against the legislation that is going to be introduced," and so he's doing this conspiracy theory. "It's completely unfounded."

Then it goes on to state that Mr Carnevale is not a Tory. No, he's a card-carrying Liberal, vice-president of

the riding association for one of Kennedy's caucus colleagues, Mr Joe Cordiano. So Carnevale isn't likely to be in bed with the Tories.

Yet today, when the Liberals introduced a bill trying to save their bungling—they're embarrassed about what they've done. That's what they've done. They introduce a bill today. And what does the member opposite, Mr Kennedy himself, say today? I want to get his riding right, Mr Speaker—Parkdale-High Park. Again in question period, he attacks and says there's a conspiracy. He doesn't drop it. He doesn't take the hint from his leader who has said out in the media, "Oh no, no. We don't want to talk about that." He goes down the road of this conspiracy again, this grand scandal. He probably believes the X-Files is truth.

So I'm a little bit concerned that this issue is getting caught up in politics because of political wrangling and posturing, because they don't want to support the bill.

Interjections.

Hon Mr Clark: The member for Hamilton Mountain is now spouting off. I'd like to know where she was when there was a bill on Hamilton. You voted against back-to-work legislation for our kids to go back to school in Hamilton. You voted against it. Yet here, now, because there's an election coming, they're scrambling trying to find some way to get on the right side of the issue.

I give credit to the NDP on the opposite side. You have historically been consistent when you're in opposition. But when you're in government, lo and behold—what an interesting flip-flop when they're in government. Now they have to be reasonable and pragmatic governors instead of obstructionists. What did you do? You passed back-to-work legislation not once, not twice, but three times when you were in government, one of them without the permission of the Education Relations Commission. It's fascinating that when you're in government, all of a sudden you understand how important it is to keep the kids in school, but when you're in opposition, you obstruct. Shameful.

1600

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain): What did your Premier say a year ago?

Hon Mr Clark: The member for Hamilton Mountain will find this fascinating: Excellence for All, the Liberal education document. I quote—

Interjection.

Hon Mr Clark: Oh, don't take offence. I'm just reading from your book. I'm sorry if this is offending you. I'm going to quote: "We believe that learning goes beyond the basics. Education must challenge and inspire our kids. It must offer"—

Mrs Bountrogianni: Don't patronize me, Brad.

Hon Mr Clark: Now, please let me finish. There will be ample time for your heckling—"all students the opportunity to experience a full range of learning that includes music, art and drama, as well as sports"—are you ready for this, Rosio?

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): Rosario.

Hon Mr Clark: Rosario—"and other extracurricular activities. These are not frills. These are essential parts of a well-rounded education."

In the Liberal platform—I'm not the brightest light in this place, I tell you, but I'm never hypocritical.

Read this. They're stating here that extracurricular activities are not frills; they're an essential part of a well-rounded education.

What has the government of Ontario put forth but a bill that makes sure they cannot withdraw in a concerted or organized way from those very same things that you say are an essential part of education, and you oppose it. Shocking.

It gets better. I find it fascinating—

Interjection: That's as good as they come.

Hon Mr Clark: I've got lots of time, because you guys opposed the bill and you're stopping it from going forward. I'm going to take my time.

I've been in this place four years and I've heard opposition members, specifically the Liberals, rise many times in this place and say, "Well, you bring in a bill, but where's the regulation?" Have you heard that? Have you ever heard them say, "You bring in the bill, but where's the regulation? We can't vote for this bill because we don't know what the regulation will say"? So then we turn around and we bring in a bill, and a regulation with it because we want to make these Liberals happy. I know it's a big challenge for us. The actual regulation says—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): The minister has the floor. He is the only one permitted to speak at this time. All other members will have their turns later in the debate. Minister.

Hon Mr Clark: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Before I read what's in the regulation, I'm going to read a couple of other things here. Mr McGuinty was quoted May 21 in a media interview as stating that he believed the administration of the EQAO test was part of the teacher's job. Remember that, my friends. That's what he said. It's important. He said that the administration of the EQAO test is part of the job of a teacher.

Mrs Bountrogianni: And they do it willingly.

Hon Mr Clark: Except when they withdraw it and work to rule.

The other statement we have here is from their Excellence for All. We're back to the Liberal platform, Excellence for All.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Clark: I know your platform is painful.

It says here, "We will also give all parents and members of the public the right to information on public education." He has agreed that the EQAO test is a part of the teacher's job and they've agreed that the right to information is important. It's in your platform.

The regulation says—shocking—that we want them to fully complete report cards, administer the EQAO test, meet with students and parents—that would be passing on information about public education, one would think—

Interjection: Dalton would agree with that.

Hon Mr Clark: —I think Dalton would agree—maintain co-op education placements for students and participate in graduation activities for the students. So we identified very clearly, in a regulation, clarifying the teachers' responsibilities and duties. That's what we did.

Mr McGuinty states that he believes the EQAO test is part of it, but he opposes the bill. The reason they're opposing this bill, the reason they're opposing Bill 28 unequivocally, is the fact that we're saying that when the teachers go back to work, they cannot withdraw their services in a work-to-rule campaign, in an organized and concerted way.

Forgive me for being somewhat suspicious that when we put in back-to-work legislation, the teachers' union might turn around and say to their members, "We're not happy, so withdraw the following services: completing report cards, administering tests, meeting with parents, maintaining co-op education." The people at home might ask themselves, "Why did you mention those in a regulation?" That's because the actual documentation from the teachers' union told the teachers themselves to withdraw those very services. "We're doing work-to-rule," the teachers' union, OECTA, says, "and therefore the teachers will withdraw from doing those services. They will not complete report cards, they will not mark and participate in the EQAO test, they will not meet with students and parents, they will not maintain co-op education placement programs, they will not participate in graduation programs." The government, in its wisdom, says, "We can't have that." So we put a bill in place that not only orders them back to work but says, "You can't withdraw those services in an organized and concerted way after you're back to work."

I'm shocked that the opposition parties, specifically the Liberals, would oppose it when Mr McGuinty has spoken in favour of these very same issues that we put in the regulation. He said the EQAO testing is part of the job of the teacher. He puts it right in his Excellence For All.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Clark: Madame, please. I know you're having a hard time running under the platform you have, but it's right here. You stated that extracurricular activities are not frills. "These are not frills. These are essential parts of a well-rounded education." That's what you said in your platform, and you vote against—

Mrs Bountrogianni: Oh, just relax. You're going to have an aneurysm.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Hamilton-Mountain will come to order.

Minister, would you like to address your remarks through the Speaker?

Hon Mr Clark: I apologize, Mr Speaker. If I'm going to have an aneurysm, I'll have it protecting kids in my community; you're damned right, I will.

The inconsistencies on the opposite side are just absolutely shocking. I have teachers who call me, I have parents who call me, and they say, "You know what?

After reading the bill, it makes sense to me." Shocking. You ask parents—

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): Name names.

Hon Mr Clark: You'd like that, so you could run around and say, "Freedom of information." You're so interested in taking expert advice from people from Ireland and all over the world on how to run the province that you forget to go and talk to the people out there who can actually tell you what they want. Parents in Ontario want report cards filled out completely, parents in Ontario want the EQAO tests marked, parents in Ontario want to have meetings with students and parents. They want to hear that. You don't want to hear that, but we do. They don't want to maintain co-op education placement programs over there. We do. Graduation is coming. This Thursday, I'm going to my daughter's graduation in Hamilton. I'm looking forward to it.

Mrs Bountrogianni: That's nice.

Hon Mr Clark: It is nice. I'm looking forward to it.

Mrs Bountrogianni: I mean it.

Hon Mr Clark: She does mean it. She's an honourable member and I believe that. But it is sad that here in Toronto, that's at risk, and for any opposition member to oppose this bill because of these items—I don't know how you can explain it to the voters at the door. I don't know how you can explain it to the parents. How can you explain that teachers should have the right to withdraw from these services when it's a part of their job? How can you explain that? I don't know how you can possibly explain that.

1610

I was shocked the other day when the leader of the loyal opposition stood—I think it was the first question period in this place where this issue came up—and he was trying to jump on his white horse, the big hero—

Interjection: He fell off the other side.

Hon Mr Clark: He fell off the other side. He said he talked to the teachers' union, he spoke to the Ministry of Labour, he spoke to the Ministry of Education. I've talked to my ministry; there was no phone call from his office. We've talked to the Ministry of Education; there was no phone call. He's turning around and saying to the public that he's trying to get the two sides together. I love this. You'll love this. Think about this for a second. It's not that hard to think about. The leader of the loyal opposition comes into this place and says, "What we really should be doing is trying to get both sides to sit down and communicate, to negotiate, to talk." My ministry has a mediator who does that all the time. Some 96% of all labour disputes are settled through mediation, so we continue to encourage it, but we want the kids back in school.

Do you know what's really interesting? You're going to scratch your head on this too, I'm sure you are. The leader of the loyal opposition says, "We want both sides to sit down together," and the very day he says that the papers are filled with the attacks on the school board. He attacks the chair of the board, the very person he needs to sit down and talk to. He attacks and accuses of a con-

spiracy the very person who is involved with the negotiations. The chair of the board attacked the member for Parkdale-High Park, stating that there's no conspiracy; he's pushing rumours.

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): Just a lot of coincidences.

Hon Mr Clark: Lots of coincidences.

I ask you, go and talk to any private mediator and ask them if a private mediator or arbitrator would in their process attack one of the parties they're going to try to mediate with. Thank goodness he's not the Premier today, because that type of intervention would be tremendously embarrassing for the province of Ontario, to have the Leader of the Opposition turn around and say he wants them to mediate but then he attacks one of the parties in mediation.

If the Minister of Labour had stood up and done that, there would be an apocalyptic cloud rising above Toronto the size of the moon, screaming, "How dare he intervene." But no, it's OK for the leader of the loyal opposition to play politics on this type of issue. It's shameful, absolutely shameful.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Clark: The member opposite continues. They don't even issue a mea culpa. They continue to encourage this conspiracy theory.

I'm going to read a couple of editorials. You'll find this fascinating, too. These are good; I love these.

This is the Toronto Star. You're going to find this shocking. "Yet now, more than ever, teachers and boards have an obligation to work together to provide quality education at less cost. Should they fail or prove unwilling, Queen's Park must prepare itself to take strong measures, including swiftly passing back-to-work legislation before a student's right to a proper education is jeopardized."

Interjection: Pass Gerard's bill.

Hon Mr Clark: Pass Gerard's bill so that the teachers can go back to not completing report cards, not administering EQAO tests, not meeting with students and parents, not co-operating in co-op programs and not participating in graduation. Pass Gerard's bill so that they can go ahead and withdraw their services.

Do you know what? The teachers themselves have made it abundantly clear that they want to do these things but they can't do them because the teachers' union tells them that they can't, and should a teacher ignore the teachers' union, guess what happens? They're fined. If a teacher says, "I want to sit down with parents and with my student because he's having difficulties with math, and I want to work this through," and the teachers' union finds out, they fine him because he broke solidarity. If they complete report cards when they're told not to complete report cards, they'll be fined because the union says, "You will withdraw these services." Forgive me for being the Minister of Labour who says that I'm concerned here. We want these kids back in school; the teachers want these kids back in school; the parents want these kids back in school; the opposition claims to want

these kids back in school. But I don't want them back in school and to have the teachers' union turn around one week later and tell them, "You're going to do a work-to-rule campaign because we're not happy."

We want the teachers to have the right to do to their job. They want to do their job. I've talked to a lot of teachers. I didn't have to wait for a challenge from the member opposite. I've been in many schools over the last four years and I've spoken to many teachers, many parent councils, and do you know what they all tell me: "Why do we have to have the right to strike?"

I've got to ask you something. In an enlightened society where the Labourers' International Union, which is an incredible union, has not had a strike in 30 to 40 years—you've got to hear this. Here's a union that represents labourers. They have not had a strike in 30 to 40 years. You might ask yourselves, "How could they do this? How could they be such an enlightened union that there's no strike." They made a decision that they don't like strikes, so they said they're not going to have any strikes. What they did was go to their employer groups and say, "We don't believe that we need to have strikes. We're going to work out a voluntary mediation-arbitration process which is reasonable, fair and equitable to all parties. We will do our collective bargaining and whatever we don't resolve will go to arbitration." It's strikingly similar to Bill 28. You know what? They haven't had a strike in 30 years.

I would ask the member opposite, why is it that we have to have this debate, period? Why couldn't the teachers' union be as enlightened? Why couldn't the teachers' union, right now, because the Labour Relations Act allows for it, go to a voluntary mediation-arbitration process. One would have to ask, why is it that we haven't done it? Why can't they do that?

Mrs McLeod: Why wouldn't they?

Hon Mr Clark: Why wouldn't they do that? It's a good question. Why wouldn't they do that?

Interjection.

Hon Mr Clark: The lockout has nothing to do with going ahead of time—

Interjection.

Hon Mr Clark: You know what? You really don't understand labour relations. You seem to believe that just magically, all of a sudden, there was a lockout, that there wasn't an escalation of problems.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Clark: It's shameful that the member doesn't understand that if the union leaders had wanted to sit down with the board a year ago, they could have begun dealing with a voluntary mediation-arbitration process and none of this would be here. One hundred and nine school boards have collective agreements in good standing. Only 11 school boards across this province have the right to strike currently because they've gone through that process where they're in that legal right to strike position, and 11 of them are on work-to-rule.

I'm curious. How can there be other unions in the province of Ontario that do not have strikes because they

have contemplated the impact on their members to the point that this is not an appropriate solution and they consciously approach their employer and they say, "We should have voluntary mediation-arbitration. We'll go through collective bargaining, and whatever we can't resolve, we'll go to arbitration." And then there's no strikes. The last LIUNA contract was a 10-year contract, by the way.

But it didn't happen. You would think the teachers' union would be that enlightened, that they would understand how important this is. Of all the unions in the province of Ontario, you would think the teachers' union would understand that it hurts kids. They keep saying it's all about the kids. You would think they would recognize that a strike, a lockout or work to rule hurts the kids. So why can't we resolve this without having strikes, lockouts and work to rule? But they can't do that. For whatever reasons, the teachers' union has chosen to go down that path.

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I went through and I found these editorials from the Toronto Star. This is going back to 1993 when these editorials were written.

"Teachers currently have the right to strike in the province, but lengthy strikes that smack of political protest abuse the process. As for the suggestion that thousands more teachers may join the social contract process, it's time to consider whether a service as essential as education should be so vulnerable to the whims of politics." That's 1993. The Toronto Star was prophetic.

We're sitting in a situation where quite clearly we have presented a bill which is reasonable, which is pragmatic, and which allows the two sides to continue to bargain. It allows the two sides to pick an arbitrator, and should they fail to pick one, the minister picks one. There are clear guidelines for the minister to follow. It also states that once they go back, they're not going to be able to withdraw it in an organized or concerted way, work to rule. They're not going to be able to withdraw it. And that's what the opposition have a problem with.

It comes back to, as I stated, in their own document, the very issues that we put into the regulation.

Administering EQAO tests: on May 21, Mr McGuinty said he believes administering the test is a part of the teacher's job, so why is he opposing this? We're so used to this. I'll have to check the best-before date on that comment, but he stated that.

Their own platform states, "Education must challenge and inspire our kids." We agree with that. "It must offer all students the opportunity to experience a full range of learning that includes music, art, drama, as well as sports and extracurricular activities. These are not frills," the Liberals say. "These are essential parts of a well-rounded education," the Liberals say.

But here we are: they're obstructing a bill, they're obstructing back-to-work legislation, on the principle that they're opposed to having the teachers mark the EQAO tests. They're opposed to us putting it in regulation.

They also state in Excellence For All, their Liberal education document, "We will also give all parents and members of the public the right to information on public education." But they don't want a regulation that states that part of a teacher's job should be to meet with students and parents. They don't support that, but they support the sharing of information. Not quite consistent.

They don't support maintaining co-op education placements for students. Not quite consistent.

They don't support that the kids should have graduation ceremonies.

Rosario, I'm confused here. I know I'm repeating myself for you, but that's because I am confused here. I don't understand what he's doing over here.

The member for Parkdale-High Park, I don't understand what you're doing bringing in a bill to this place that doesn't deal with the very issue at hand, which is withdrawal of services for completing report cards, administering EQAO tests, students, parents, maintaining co-op education and graduation.

Interjections.

Hon Mr Clark: You'll have to read the law.

We want the kids back in school, and we want the kids back in school with full services. You don't seem to understand that filling out a report card is part of the teacher's job. You don't understand that an EQAO test—you don't see that as part of the job. Shameful. You should be ashamed. You don't agree with meeting with parents and students? How can you not agree with that? How can you not agree with maintaining co-op education for the kids so they get experience out there in the work world? How can you not agree with the kids having a graduation ceremony?

But no, you've got to do all this, "We're opposed to this bill." Then you turn around and say, "We're opposed because of just one section in the bill. Pull that section out of the bill."

Mr Marchese: A clean bill.

Hon Mr Clark: A clean bill, that's what they're saying. What I don't understand is, while they're saying they want a clean bill in their right hand, that they want the kids in school, at the same time they've said publicly that they believe report cards should be marked fully by teachers. The Leader of the Opposition, on the other hand, said that administering EQAO tests is part of the teacher's job. They've said very clearly that meeting with students and parents is part of the teacher's job, that co-op education is part of the job and so is graduation. We've heard them for the last four years spout off about how important these functions are. It's in their own platform, and when we, the government, put it in a bill to ensure that it will not be withdrawn in an organized or concerted way, they oppose it.

Interjection: Typical Liberals.

Mr Marchese: What does the NDP say?

Hon Mr Clark: You're consistent when you're in opposition, but when you're in government you're no longer consistent, because that's when you supported back-to-work legislation three times.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Clark: I'm sorry. The facts speak for themselves.

So I still believe very clearly that Bill 28 should be passed with due haste, and that the opposition party should withdraw the stalling tactics they're using on the bill. The people at home should be calling the opposition members in their constituency offices and letting them know what's going on.

I'm going to finish my time here and defer my time to the member for York North, who will knock it out of the park for the rest of the day, and finish what I've missed.

But I say shame on the opposition, that they would turn around and introduce a bill they claim is clean, and at the same time say that they support all of the objectives the government put forth. I say shame on them, because the people who are hurting from this are the students themselves. The kids are not in school because of the game-playing and political posturing on the opposite side of this House, and that is shameful.

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): It is my pleasure to rise today in support of the bill that we are debating.

Our children's education is a top priority for this government and all Ontarians. As members are aware, the Toronto Catholic District School Board has locked out its elementary school teachers because of the inability of both parties to reach a mutually acceptable agreement. As we speak, approximately 69,000 students are out of the classroom. Instead of being in class and learning, they and their parents are pawns in a struggle between the teachers' union and the school board. This act that we are debating today represents the decisive action our government is taking to ensure students are able to complete their studies without the threat of school-year disruptions because of strikes, lockouts or so-called work-to-rule campaigns.

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This is not the only disruption we have had in schools in the province. Work-to-rule campaigns in other boards are hampering instruction time. Teachers are arriving 15 minutes before class and leaving 15 minutes after classes end. They're not providing comments on report cards. As a result, parents have no idea of how their children are doing in school and what help they may need. Some teachers are refusing to cover classes for absent teachers. As a result, students are being shortchanged when they should have the opportunity to learn. We all know that a lost day of instruction is a lost opportunity for success.

Other teachers are refusing to administer the standardized education quality and accountability tests. These tests are part of our government's commitment to better prepare our children to compete in today's global economy.

We have heard from parents, students and teachers. They are all disgusted with the actions that the unions and the school board are taking. Parents want to know their children are getting the best education available. They want to see report cards and test results. They want to be assured that if their children need extra help in a

subject, they will get it. They want to see their hard-earned taxes pay for education, not for a power struggle. Most important, they see their children's futures at risk.

This bill would put an end to using students and their parents as bargaining chips in contract negotiations. It would protect students and their opportunity to learn and succeed.

Our government has taken action to bring labour stability to Ontario's schools. We have already invested almost \$700 million to provide 6% increases to teachers' salary benchmarks. Clearly, then, this problem cannot be solved by throwing money at it. This problem needs strong, decisive action. That's what we are doing.

Our government believes that strikes, lockouts and work-to-rule campaigns in schools, even for one day, have a detrimental effect on students, their parents and the general community.

Let's get the students of the Toronto Catholic board back in school while the board and union resolve their differences without affecting classrooms. Let's put the students of Ontario above disputes between adults. Let's put students first.

We have provided enough money, almost \$700 million, to school boards to allow for 6% increases to teachers' salary benchmarks over two years. We have also passed legislation that provides for greater labour relations stability by requiring three-year contracts. We have done our part. Now we expect the boards and the teachers to do theirs.

Our government takes the education of our children seriously. We know that teachers are dedicated professionals who want to be in their classrooms teaching. They do not want to be on strike or take actions they know are detrimental to the education and the safety of their students.

The time for classroom disruption is over. Our goal is to ensure students receive the education they deserve without the threat of school-year disruptions because of strikes, lockouts, or work-to-rule campaigns.

Our children's education is a top priority for Ontarians and for this government. That is why we have continued to invest in education. This next school year, we'll invest \$15.5 billion, which will increase to \$16.2 billion for the 2005-06 school year.

We have also introduced Ontario students to a new, more rigorous curriculum and province-wide standardized tests to better prepare them to compete in today's global economy. It simply doesn't make sense to allow these strides forward to be jeopardized by labour disputes.

I know all members share in the conviction that our children come first. Let all of us act on that belief and pass this act.

I know that the member from Northumberland has comments to make on this as well.

Hon Doug Galt (Minister without Portfolio): I appreciate the opportunity to say a few words on this particular topic. I think the minister, the Honourable Brad Clark, really summed it up extremely well when he was

speaking on this, and with a significant amount of emotion, and rightly so, when our children are not having the opportunity to be in school, when so much work-to-rule is going on in the province of Ontario. I believe that there are some 12 different school boards where there's work-to-rule, and that's really unfair to our young people. The end result in this particular board is that we've ended up with a lockout on the part of the board, and that's unfair as well for our young people.

Our government believes that the best method of achieving a collective agreement is through negotiation. An agreement mutually acceptable to both parties is a solution that ensures labour relations stability. Indeed, the Back to School (Toronto Catholic Elementary) and Education and Provincial Schools Negotiations Amendment Act, 2003, will give the teachers' union and the Toronto Catholic District School Board seven days to negotiate and come to an agreement. This is in addition to the time they have already had to hammer out an agreement.

What's really, really important is that we have these young people back in school, that they have an opportunity to receive training on every possible day they have. However, if the union and the board are unable to come to an agreement, the act provides for the resolution of their dispute through mediation-arbitration.

Mediation-arbitration is a process commonly used to settle disputes between employers and unions when they reach a stalemate in negotiating a new collective agreement. A third party, the mediator-arbitrator, is named to resolve the dispute, either by acting as a mediator and helping the parties reach an agreement, or if that isn't possible, by making a binding arbitration decision on the issues in dispute.

The act also would give the board and the union seven days in which to find and agree on a mediator-arbitrator. If they cannot agree on a mediator during this time, the Minister of Labour will then appoint one. Under the provisions of the act, the minister would be required to appoint a person who has experience as an arbitrator or mediator-arbitrator, or experience in labour relations and education matters. The mediator-arbitrator would be required to begin the mediation-arbitration process within 30 days after his or her appointment. Finally, an award within 90 days of being appointed would be required; however, the Minister of Labour could indeed extend the timeline of the proceedings before or after the specified period. This won't cost the government anything. The fees and expenses of the mediator-arbitrator would be shared equally between the parties to the collective agreement.

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How does the mediation-arbitration work? The employer and the union meet with the mediator-arbitrator, either separately or together, and the mediator-arbitrator tries to help the parties find common ground to mutually resolve the outstanding issues.

In an ideal situation, there is give and take. However, in a labour dispute being decided by a mediator-arbitrator, if the parties are unable to reach agreement

with the help of the mediator-arbitrator, both parties attend at a formal hearing before the mediator-arbitrator. In this hearing, each party makes submissions to the mediator-arbitrator justifying their positions on all matters remaining in dispute. The mediator-arbitrator considers those submissions and any legislated criteria that he or she is required to consider and then renders a decision.

I would like to point out that at any time during this process, if the parties can resolve matters in dispute themselves and reach a new collective agreement, the mediation-arbitration process would end. So it really is, right through the whole process, left in the hands of both parties that are negotiating. They can take over and make it happen.

Under the Back to School (Toronto Catholic Elementary) and Education and Provincial Schools Negotiations Amendment Act, 2003, the mediator-arbitrator would have the exclusive jurisdiction to determine all matters that he or she considers necessary to conclude a new collective agreement. As well, the mediator-arbitrator would be required to take into consideration the Education Act and its regulations. This would include the funding regulation. Any decision made by the arbitrator must allow the board to comply with the Education Act. As well, the board must be able to implement any decision made by the arbitrator without incurring a deficit. The mediator-arbitrator's decision would determine the content of provisions of the new collective agreement.

Within some seven days of the mediator-arbitrator's decision, the new collective agreement would come into effect. Under the provisions of the act we are debating, the collective agreement determined by the arbitrator would be effective for the period beginning on September 1, 2002, and will conclude on August 31, 2004.

Mediation-arbitration works. There has been some argument that arbitrated settlements are generally higher than negotiated ones. Well, let me tell you that in recent years contracts settled through compulsory arbitration in the public sector have been in line or lower than those using negotiations in the public sector. That's certainly different than the impression most people have had in the past. They have also been lower than settlements negotiated in the private sector.

Between 1995 and 2002, settlements were reached through compulsory arbitration in the public sector in all but one year. Between 1999 and 2002 settlements reached through compulsory arbitration in the public sector were the same or lower than those reached in the public sector where there was a right to strike. So you see, arbitration indeed works, and it doesn't whack the taxpayer in the pocket.

In the Back to School (Toronto Catholic Elementary) and Education and Provincial Schools Negotiations Amendment Act, 2003, the government has bent over backwards to give both the Toronto Catholic District School Board and the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association the tools they need to reach a mutually

acceptable agreement. We have also provided for an opportunity for them to negotiate a mutually acceptable agreement. If they cannot arrive at an agreement on their own, we are providing a fair and reasonable mediation-arbitration process. I believe we have indeed been fair. It is now up to us here in this House to do the right thing and pass the legislation that gets some 69,000 young people off the streets and back in the classroom, where they belong.

It's this kind of activity in our boards and in our teachers' unions that has required our government, our party, to have a look at what's been going on in that public sector.

I served on school boards in the 1970s and I honestly believed that strikes, lockouts and work-to-rule were wrong at that time. I've always believed it was wrong. I'm just thrilled to see that in our platform not only are strikes going to be outlawed, not only will lockouts be outlawed but so will work-to-rule. Work-to-rule has been devastating to children. In some boards they have gone all the way through their secondary school experience with teachers who work to rule and those young people have not had an opportunity to participate in extra-curricular activities.

I know that most, if not all, of our teachers want to teach. They don't want to be locked out. They don't want to be on strike. I'd suggest to members in the opposition that most of those teachers are going to support our platform, based on no right to strike, no lockout, and no way are they going to be able to work to rule.

I look forward to support from the opposition on this bill.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): I think the last member has summed it up: this is not about the 69,000 kids here in Toronto, as far as the government is concerned. This is about your platform. But I would strongly suggest to the government members that the situation we're dealing with in this bill is not about your platform or our platform in an election campaign. It's to stop the lockout that right now is preventing 69,000 children in this city from going to school. So what we are simply saying is, take Bill 28 and take out the last page that deals with amendments to the Education Act which have absolutely nothing to do with this particular lockout. That's what we're asking for.

The member made some nice, pious statements about arbitration, about getting the children back into the classrooms, and we totally agree. What we do not agree with is the fact that you have included in this bill items relating to changes in the Education Act that have absolutely nothing to do with this particular lockout. Before him, the minister with pious comments could talk about all sorts of issues, but that's not what this is about.

Mr Kennedy's bill and even your own bill, part I, deal with the issue that we want to deal with as quickly as possible, and that's to get the kids back into school, to stop the lockout and have arbitration take place. We cannot consent, however, to adding in the changes to the

Education Act that have absolutely nothing to do with this lockout in this bill.

I say to the government whip and to the minister, do the right thing, truly the right thing, if you want to send the children back to school: sever the bill, let's vote on part I, which deals with the lockout, and let's deal with part II in the election campaign that you talked about.

Mr Marchese: I just want to say to the good citizens watching that I hope to be able to do my hour leadoff, or at least begin today. I absolutely don't want to waste one second in responding to the Minister of Labour. Hopefully you'll stay tuned until 6 o'clock, when I could begin my leadoff, and if I don't, I will begin tomorrow afternoon.

Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South): That's the first time I've seen a member use the two-minute Q and A to do a promo for the fact that he has a whole hour coming up to speak in rotation.

I feel very saddened about the process we're going through in terms of the subject of this bill if we think about the fact that this bill is even necessary. There's such an irony, because there is a requirement that children attend school. When that isn't possible because there is a labour dispute between the employer and the employees, and we're in the situation we're in, I would have thought all members in this House, regardless of whether they're opposition members or government members—

Mr Gerretsen: So sever the bill. Do the right thing.

Mrs Marland: I can do this quite well without the help of the member from Kingston and the Islands, thank you very much, because your opinion is somewhat different from mine, I say with respect.

1650

The point is that when children are out of school, everybody is in a difficult situation. Often the parents who are working have to stay home with those children, because suddenly there's a huge demand for child care that otherwise is not available on instant request. To deprive those children for the number of days since we introduced this bill, when we have asked for unanimous consent for second and third readings to get the children back in school, and been denied by both opposition parties, I think is frankly irresponsible, particularly on the part of the Liberal members in this House.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): I listened attentively to the Minister of Labour on television in my office and to the chief government whip here in the House, and I want to respond.

First of all, this is an unusual circumstance. We're ordering the end to a lockout. The government is ordering an end to something caused by an agent of the government, funded by the government and controlled by the government legislatively. The government can pick up the phone and say, "Stop it." For the first time in history, we're ending a lockout with legislation. How bizarre. They say we're keeping them out; we say they're keeping them out. The fact is the kids are out.

We've proposed an alternative. We disagree with part II of the bill. Take it out and let's campaign on it. Like

the chief government whip said, we absolutely differ on that part of the bill, no question about it. The bill Mr Kennedy introduced today is almost identical to parts I and III of your bill, and it's identical to bills that have been used in strikes in the past. So I say to the government, take part II out and pass this bill.

Yes, I appreciate the comment of the chief government whip when he said this is a political issue and it ought to be resolved in an election. Whether that's this spring or this fall is a decision for the Premier. But for the moment, let's agree to do what's been done in the past with strikes: introduce and pass legislation such as Mr Kennedy's legislation that will effect the same result; that is, have the kids back in school.

I regret that the talks broke down. We had a similar situation in Windsor three weeks ago. The Catholic board, in one of the most bizarre moves I've ever seen, locked the teachers out after two days of work-to-rule. Well, do you know what? The good news is they had the common sense to go back to the table with a new mediator and got an agreement very quickly. The kids wound up losing fewer days than the kids here in Toronto.

It's unfortunate that the government can't help out more in this situation.

The Acting Speaker: Response?

Hon Mr Galt: I appreciate the comments made by the various members following the presentation during the first hour by three members, being the Minister of Labour, Ms Munro and myself, and also the responses from the members for Kingston and the Islands, Trinity-Spadina, Mississauga South and Windsor-St Clair.

Listening to the opposition, all I can conclude is that they agree with work-to-rule and children not getting extracurricular activities. It doesn't seem to matter to them that teachers just go for the minimum possible time required. We're trying to ensure that when they go back, they don't go back to the classroom and just do the minimal amount possible but that they would also get rid of this work-to-rule.

I can't believe you would stand up and make those kinds of comments in this Legislature and have them recorded. It's beyond my comprehension. I've been opposed to this whole thing for over 30 years. It's just wrong, wrong, wrong. I'm thrilled to see this bill, so that when the teachers go back, there is no work-to-rule, they are not locked out and there are no strikes. That makes so much sense.

I happened to mention the platform, and the member for Kingston and the Islands jumped on the bandwagon and said, "Oh, yeah, what it's all about is a platform," and he's not concerned about this. It's a whole package, and this is an example. We're having to put all this legislation through when it should go through with unanimous approval. The kids could have been back in school last week but it's obvious that the members in opposition are not interested in getting the kids back in school. They're not interested in their education. They're not putting the kids first. The unions are not putting the kids first. Our

government is putting the kids first. The teachers want to put the kids first. But the opposition do not want to give the opportunity to put the kids first.

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): I certainly am not happy to have to rise in debate on what must be one of the most embarrassing bills this government has ever put its name to. It is the hallmark of a tired, worn out, cynical government. They'll stand in this House to justify why they would take the 69,000 kids in the Toronto Catholic board hostage to their political program and not one of them—and I note we've not heard from too many Toronto members, who have to stand up at some point and answer to the people for this bill and the other shenanigans of this government. We have not heard one member yet say what they're prepared to do to bring those kids back to school except to stand behind their political program, which has the express effect of delaying the return of those kids back to school, just so they have the scenario they're looking for. It is sad to see that this government has so little in its waning days to offer this province.

It is not acceptable that they should be derelict in their responsibilities toward these 69,000 children and their families, which have had to amend and adjust their lives for these eight days only to learn that the only people at the root of this dispute is this particular government and its strange way of handing off their responsibility to the Guy Giornos of this world and their brilliant Machiavellian tacticians who decide—and this is what we're asked to believe. The very same day a multimillion-dollar ad buy comes out on the part of the Conservative party, where are their problems in the province? The ads talk about teacher strikes and turmoil. Where can we find any turmoil in the province? It's a lockout engineered by a school board in a completely unusual fashion, at the very same time this government is trying to bring up the idea of turmoil.

Well, it might want to get out ahead of that issue, because these members opposite are personally responsible for 24 million lost days; 24 million days of which the students of this province have been deprived; four times as much as the two previous governments combined. This is the government that has coined the entire idea of how to put our public schools in turmoil. It will be readily apparent to any reasonable observer what the government really thinks it's trying to do because there is no real place for the government to hide, particularly after their performance today.

They brought in the ads the same day. Did the Premier jump on the phone in a fashion that—20 years ago in his own riding he bragged that he spent 35 hours, not to end a strike or a lockout, but rather just to get the two sides talking again. He spent 35 hours, by his own admission. The Premier, who is sponsoring this particular political bill—not the Minister of Education—did not lift a finger the entire time. In fact, there was fair warning of this. We wrote to the school board and said, "It would be unacceptable for you to use the lockout provisions in the legislation in this fashion." Nothing could be heard from

the Conservative side, nothing whatsoever, because it was coordinated.

Equally, what did they do next? Did they try to get the sides together? Did they propose mediation? Did they do anything? Instead, they brought in the most unusual back-to-work bill we've ever seen in the history of the province of Ontario. They didn't bring in a bill that would neutralize the lockout and help keep goodwill in the schools. No, they brought in a bill with a poisoned clause in it. Bringing in a bill that does not bring kids back to their classrooms or get the two sides talking again only serves one particular purpose. As peace was breaking out all across the province in terms of school boards, with unions and federations of teachers and other education workers getting agreements, the government needed a pretext. We stand here today because of this sad, sorry excuse of a pretext that the government is trying to put upon us.

1700

The only turmoil in the province today is Tory-inspired turmoil. The government stands in front of us, in fact, and defends. What have they done since they brought in the legislation? Have they said, "We'll roll up our sleeves"? Has the Minister of Education even exercised herself to see if there's a way to solve this particular problem? No. What each member of the government has done—and I'll say to the public watching that they'll find this throughout this debate—is defend this phoney lockout. They won't say it's wrong. They won't say it's depriving kids. They will defend this lockout because it serves their political gamesmanship to do that. It's very, very sad, but a telling indicator of a government that has run completely out of gas when it comes to any way of approaching the problems of this province.

What makes it utterly unacceptable is that they make these calculations, they enter into these lazy arrangements, without any consideration for the 69,000 kids who could and should have gone back to school. The government has not done a single constructive thing to put kids back in school. Maybe 20 years ago Ernie Eves would have rolled up his sleeves, but today it takes Dalton McGuinty, our leader, and Dwight Duncan, our House leader. They have been spending their time. They have found mediators. They have talked constructively to each side involved in this dispute. They got them back to the table. They got them to change their approaches. Meanwhile, the government sits on its haunches just waiting and hoping that more turmoil will break out in this province.

If there was any doubt in any part of the public out there about who wished for this lockout by the board, this very unusual lockout by the board, this convenient lockout that only serves the government's purposes—almost never seen and rarely ever used, and never at this point of a dispute—it was erased today. Today we brought in a bill to bring about stability and goodwill in the Toronto Catholic elementary panel, and the government members did not agree to that bill. That bill does what some of the

members—obviously they're afraid to talk about their bill, maybe not familiar with it. The government members did not speak to the part of their bill, the poisoned clauses, that makes it a non-back-to-work bill and a political program. Instead, this gamesmanship becomes readily apparent.

Our bill basically is set on normal bills that are legislated solutions. This is a phony lockout, and it needs to be ended in a way that conveys dignity to the teachers who are affected and conveys peace and goodwill to these students. Each of these government members had the option today of supporting that bill. They have the option still in this House because the bill's been introduced, but their House leader spoke up against it and refused, on their official behalf, any unanimous consent to get them negotiating, to get mediation-arbitration happening in a fair manner if they didn't.

Their bill has other poisoned clauses in it. But for some particular reason they've been persuaded by their brains trust that it's better to have these kids locked out; it's better to have them on the streets; it's better not to have them enjoying their education. It's stunning that it has come to this, that the government members can actually contemplate that this is something they can inflict on 69,000 people. I say to you, what hubris on the part of this government that would play those kinds of games with that many people's lives here in Toronto. If they want to say differently, then today in the debate, or in the unfortunate days that are going to follow, explain exactly what you couldn't support in our particular bill—a fair bill that we have no appetite to bring in except because of what you're planning to do, which is to poison the relationships that exist.

We heard today a very sad performance on the part of the Minister of Labour. The Minister of Labour did not explain to this House what was in his particular bill. The Minister of Labour talked about work-to-rule. He neglected to name, and not one member across will name, a single situation—not one—across the province that part II of their bill currently applies to in terms of work-to-rule. Why? It doesn't eliminate legal work-to-rule actions, which I think parents who are out there, while they don't like work-to-rule, prefer over a complete strike, which is why they're stunned by the government's choice to continue a lockout, to continue a situation where students are not going to school whatsoever. But each of those work-to-rules that exist in the province today exist only in situations of people who have the right to strike, and they're choosing not to strike. They're showing restraint. Not one of those situations is affected by the bill the government has.

Then what is in this poisoned part of the bill? What is the government trying to pull off here, rather than having a clean bill, a bill that simply puts kids back in school while the two sides are able to negotiate, and if they're not able to negotiate to a good conclusion, that puts that to mediation-arbitration? Why can't the government do that?

What they've done instead is put in provisions changing the definition of a strike, changing the defini-

tions of teachers in an open-ended fashion. They've done that in a way that, according to legislative research, will have a chilling effect on extracurricular activities. A couple of members opposite had the audacity to stand up here and say they had some scintilla of interest in the arrangements in their schools that provide extracurricular activities. This Soviet-style, tired Conservative government would actually like to mandate the Saturday mornings, the evenings and the overnight trips that are being done across this province. It's incredible that they would refuse to see the teachers of this province as professionals.

But I want to remind you that this is not the first time we've been fed this warmed-over Republican Pabulum from these people opposite. Two years ago they brought in Bill 74 and said to the people of this province, "We'll mandate extracurricular activities." What they managed to arrange, again with their startlingly able brains trust, is the loss of extracurricular activities for 430,000 students. Every one of these members sat supine while the students of this province were deprived of their homework clubs, deprived of their math quizzes after school, deprived of their basketball games only because the government, sitting here at Queen's Park, said it would twitch its finger and somehow do something that would have an outcome they knew ahead of time couldn't be derived.

We've seen this movie before, but here we are again on the good ship Titanic, Progressive Conservative Ontario. They're watching this movie. They're abiding by it. They're defending it. They want again to put the students of this province to work in terms of their hostages, to have them work for them because they badly want to change the channel.

They did, a year ago, say a variety of things about some of the policies they've tried to make hostage to this bill. We hear Mr Eves talking about how you can't legislate goodwill. When it comes to banning strikes or lockouts or involving yourself from Queen's Park and getting in the way of a safety valve in the schools, they said, "We can't legislate goodwill," but now they're going to try. In fact, I would say today that this is a classic case of a government legislating bad will. They would inflict bad will not just into the Catholic schools but into all the schools around the province.

What are we doing with a bill that purports to address the needs of 69,000 students in Toronto and yet has clauses in it that affect the whole province? Just like this government would hold a budget in an auto parts plant, just like they would spend millions of your dollars on ads that have been found factually incorrect, misleading—those are the words used by an outside body, the advertising council—this is the kind of government that would go to the lengths we're at here today, with our children in Toronto hostage to their political ambitions. They are poor political ambitions. They don't have ambitions for our kids to do well. They don't have ambitions for our kids to do better in school. They have a singular ambition, and their singular ambition is simply to be re-elected. They believe that somehow by engineering

turmoil, by encouraging it, by doing nothing, by abdicating their responsibility as a government—by leaving it up to Dalton McGuinty, Dwight Duncan and a range of people to actually be constructive, to try and find ways to get people together, they have abdicated their responsibilities. Notwithstanding our disagreement with their adoration and interest in bad policy from the Americans in the south, this doesn't make any sense.

But people need to know why. Why would the government go to these kinds of lengths? Why would they put 69,000 kids on the street? Why would they inconvenience 69,000 families when they could have had them back in school tomorrow morning on the basis of our bill, back earlier by being involved in getting the sides talking?

The answer can be found fairly readily. The government has backed away from fixing education. They don't want people to reckon with the lack of teachers in their schools. They don't want people to reckon with the lack of textbooks. They spout numbers here, but let me guarantee you that if there is an election, or if there is not an election and there is a legislative session, by the end of that it will be very, very clear to all the interested people in this province that this government has decided not to do what its own independent commission has told it.

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For example, in the case of the Toronto Catholic board, in the case of the students in question here today, whom the government has taken hostage, Dr Rozanski, their independent commissioner looking at the funding of schools, indicated that the Catholic board in Toronto was due approximately \$73 million. Over \$60 million of that is still outstanding. This government has only even promised 30% of the funding that is due to the school boards and, more importantly, the children attending school in this province. They have paid for tax cuts, and paid for other priorities on the backs of school kids. They neglected to do what Dr Rozanski said, which was to pay something, yes, toward settlements this year, but also to pay for the gas, for the lighting, for the other costs. They refuse to do that.

We have the consequences of a government trying to change the channel from one of their most important responsibilities. How are they supporting the learning of our kids in school? It becomes very clear. The literacy tests this year were actually worse outcomes than last year. This government is unable and unwilling to set targets for how well students could do. The reason for that is they can't make it move. Right now, the other bill that we're debating in this Legislature concerning education is a private school tax credit. I think again that their refusal to pass a clean peace and stability bill today, a clean bill that would get people back talking and get them to mediation without any other political gamesmanship, shows us all what Bill 28 is about. It serves their political interests.

So does the companion bill promoting private school tax credits. This government's ambition is very, very clear. They have decided to throw over any emphasis in

publicly funded education. There is no way you can reconcile the job that this government wants to do in terms of giving funds to private, secular schools. Seventy-five per cent of the approximately \$500 million they want to spend on private schools is going to secular schools. It's not going to conscientious objectors, it's not going to religious families, it's going to private, secular schools. This turmoil the government has fomented—it has a track record, 24 million lost days. It has never in fact—

Mrs Marland: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I believe there is a standing order pertaining to information being factually correct and I'm suggesting the speaker who has the floor is saying something that is not factually correct about the intention of this bill.

The Acting Speaker: It is not up to the Speaker to decide.

Mr Kennedy: It is a sensitivity on the government's part, I can understand.

They sit here with this intent of misdirection. They have a bill that purports to do something positive and what it really does is block the return of students to class. What could be so important to block the return of students to class, to support a lockout that makes no sense whatsoever? How can the government put itself in that role? Because it has political ambitions. Its political gamesmanship is to promote a private school system. That's what they're prepared to do. They're prepared in fact to spend \$3,500 on any student taught by anyone—could be refused by anyone in any situation in the province. They don't have to meet standards, they don't have to meet curriculum, they don't have to have any standards met whatsoever. In fact, I think if you look around the provinces, not just here, if you look in the States and so on, you will not see a grant from government with so little requirements of this.

The ideologues have taken hold in this party. They're the same kind of ideologues that could say, "Let's do an advertising campaign and let's make sure there is some turmoil happening in a school board somewhere. When it happens, let's not deal with it, let's not solve that problem. Let's do whatever we can to keep it going." That is why we're here today. There are members of this party who have stood up and said they believe in private schools as superior to the public school system. They don't believe in sharing—

Mrs Marland: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: With respect, Mr Speaker, the bill that is on the floor is not pertaining to private schools whatsoever. I think he should be called to speak to the bill on—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you very much. The member for Parkdale-High Park.

Mr Kennedy: I can understand why the member opposite wishes to interrupt. It can't be pleasant to hear. Some of these members at one time might have had an attachment to public education, but they have hitched their wagons to this party at this time.

The Premier himself a year ago said he would put conditions on this. Other members of this government,

their former Premier, said it's a bad idea. The same Minister of Finance who stood in the House earlier this week and said, "Here is the private school tax credit," said, "This is not a good idea; in fact, it will cause disruption, it will cause problems in the public school system." And so did everyone who's looked at this question decide.

Thirty-two US states had referendums, were bolder than this government. This government told us last time they wouldn't do this. Instead, bolder people than this government put it to the people, and 32 times they voted against private schools.

Hon Helen Johns (Minister of Agriculture and Food): Talk about the 69,000 kids, or don't you care about them?

The Acting Speaker: I will not warn the Minister of Agriculture and Food again.

The member for High Park.

Mr Kennedy: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

It is passing strange. You would think that a government, even at this stage, as lazy and as unwilling to get up and deal with the problems as they are, that once they've subscribed to this, you'd think they'd be proud of it. Instead, they want not to hear. They need to hear, and people out there need to hear.

Why is it that the government of Ernie Eves, the successor to Mike Harris, is not interested in a peaceful solution? Why did they turn down a peaceful solution today? Why did they decline to meet with us last weekend? Why did they decline to do anything to bring the kids back? Why do they insist on sticking to a bill that contains a piece of their election platform smack in the middle of it? Why do they do that at the expense of 69,000 children? Well, it is clearly—and I say this with as much generosity as I can muster—a government that has lost its way, a government that used to be in touch with some of the needs of the people but now will be told what those needs are by some clever pollster, somebody who's going to say to them, "You know what? If we push this button, we're going to get some more votes."

Rather than do a good job on behalf of your constituents in Scarborough or in Don Mills or someplace, you abandoned that. You abandoned those 69,000 kids because, "We're going to bring you home. We're going to bring you home by attacking teachers." That's part of what their agenda is, and we heard it today. They could not find the grace to say that the teachers have been made pawns by this particular government, to admit at least that this is part of their agenda.

You saw on this lawn probably a thousand very puzzled people. They want to be teaching their kids. They are prepared to do that. Again, some of the members opposite have tried to say, "We want to make sure they aren't working to rule." Well, the bill that was put in front of them ends any chance of work-to-rule. So these members opposite have only one reason—one reason—to continue to vote against our bill and to continue to delay bringing kids back to school, and that is the turmoil that they want to have happen in the education system.

Because when they switch subjects, when they deal with the things that really need to be dealt with in education—I'll say for example, the way they're leaving kids behind.

All over this province, there are approximately 700,000 kids crammed in classes of 30 or more. Young children can be found in every single riding who are not learning because they're lost. These are kids this government would leave behind. They would not attend to their needs. How did they do that? They got rid of 15,000 teachers.

That's what this bill is about today. It's about covering up the Tory record by creating some blame and distraction agenda over here, by having poisoned legislation like we have today, not a clean bill, not something that actually says, "OK, there's been a mess made out there. Let's see what we can do to put it back together in a way that will actually benefit those kids." Instead, we have in front of us the leftovers. We have a bill that is really trying to promote the government at the expense of those kids who are being left behind.

We propose that the dollars this government wants to spend on the private school tax credit, the dollars they would rather spend on tax cuts for large corporations, are needed. They're needed by those kids. The children left behind in every community in Ontario need to be found by their teachers by reducing class size. They need to get our assistance as early on in their education as possible. That's the only way we can do this in a reasonable fashion. Waiting for people to become grade 10 or grade 12 is not the way to go.

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To have a government take out ads that talk about every day mattering to students and at the same time ignoring the needs of those kids; allocating the funds elsewhere; not putting their energies into solving the problems in the Toronto Catholic board, the way people on this side of the House have directed their energies; not trying to arrange discussions that weren't taking place; not finding, as Mr Duncan, our House leader, did, three acceptable mediators who could be involved in this, who are ready to go right now; not drafting a bill that would cause the least amount of harm for the most amount of good—that's not what the members opposite have engaged themselves with.

Instead, they've been busy abdicating their role as a referee and trying to find people to blame, because when it comes down to it, that's how they've gotten along and that's how they hope to get along in terms of the next election. They think somehow if they blame teachers again, that will bring back some of the glory days when people actually believed this government. I may not be the person to tell them, but they've lost the benefit of the doubt. People no longer believe that when this government moves forward it has their interests held to heart.

There's been no better explanation or example of that than the bill we have in front of us today. This bill only promotes the government's interests. It says to 69,000 kids, "You should be out of school for five more days," not because of the complexities of this place—that's

probably not necessary. The member of the third party can tell us whether it would be, but it's probably not due to any problems that exist inherently in terms of the dispute. Although I won't minimize those, in our estimation, they don't require locking out 69,000 kids, and if the government would exercise itself, it would find out the same thing. To have the authority responsible for the welfare of those kids, with the endowed authority under the Education Act for the well-being and development of those kids, to lock those kids out in such a premature fashion is unheard of, but this government is content to defend that. They are content to further hold out false hope to the people of this province, to say to the people of this province they're going to do something about it.

They haven't got a clue what the price of entry is in terms of generating the goodwill in this province to actually have peace, and that, sadly, will only come with a change in government—sadly for them I think but good news for the students of this province, surely, and good news for long-suffering parents who have been made to suffer through the 24 million lost days of the Conservative government. I say that only because we recognize what's at the root of this. At the root of this is an attitude that isn't about fixing problems. It isn't about bringing solutions. That's not the behaviour we've seen over the eight days of lost classes that this government has endowed on the students of Toronto Catholic elementary schools—far from it. Instead, they have tried to revel in the political benefits. They have had their Premier introduce this bill. They have had the Minister of Labour rail about teachers. They have tried every way they can to extract and take out political benefit. What they should have been doing is trying to resolve this situation. It is, I believe, the right of no political party to take that kind of licence, and they have taken that licence.

What we need instead, clearly, is a peace plan that will last for some time. This government would propose to throw over its principles and quote only Mr Eves when he says, "We don't live in a dictatorship. I'm adamant about not trampling on people's rights. There's no democracy if people can't strike." Well, we're not talking about a strike today; we're talking about a lockout that was engineered in concert with this particular government, done in a fashion that really brings disrepute on the government of the day, but slightly on the institutions of government, and that's where they seem to be. This is not the Mr Eves of years gone by or even of a year gone by, where he pooh-poohed Mr Flaherty's suggestions. We have a platform that is called the road to somewhere. Well, it's the road to Jim Flaherty, because it's bringing out that right-wing element, that overused, over-right Republican sentiment that this government thinks, hopes, desperately believes might get it elected. But that's not good enough for the bill we have in front of us today.

The bill we have in front of us today does not permit the students of this province, the students of Toronto elementary schools, to take the primacy they deserve. This is not a government that has lifted a finger, returned a single phone call, done anything to make sure those kids have done that.

I am proud to say that on this side of the House a variety of our members—people like Dwight Duncan, our House leader, who has had a lot of good, positive experience in terms of bringing about resolutions that keep the maximum amount of goodwill in; our leader, Dalton McGuinty; and also each of our Toronto members—have tried in their own way to help this situation. Sadly, none of the members opposite have lent themselves to that endeavour. That's what I mean when I say the disrepute is somewhat shared; it isn't just isolated to those ridings.

I want to say to the people watching out there that there are alternatives to this. There is an alternative to this government's bill and it's the bill we put forward today. It's a bill that sends the kids back to school tomorrow morning. If enough phone calls come in to the Premier's office, to the education minister, to any of their members here in Toronto and, frankly, any members they have, it might have that salutary effect. It might tell them that they can't get away with it, because we do sit every day facing a government that perhaps no longer believes but hopes desperately it can get away with it.

Well, Mr Speaker, I put to you and I put to the House that that's not really possible any more. The government has stood in front of us with inadequate justification to take schooling away from 69,000 children, with no justification for why they would not support a bill that we propose that puts the maximum amount of goodwill and stability back in schools by preserving dignity for the teachers who are involved, giving them a say, as other bills in the past have, on a mediator, to make sure they aren't disadvantaged from what was really a stunt pulled by their school board.

That is a solution this government could have proposed itself; it didn't do that. It has instead taken out ads extolling the turmoil that goes on in schools at the very same time that it's creating it. It has brought in a bill with a poisoned clause, a clause that changes the way teaching and learning happen in this province in the negative, that would take services that currently happen today and make them illegal if they were continued by people who have given them freely.

This is the same government that doesn't want to hear that the average salary of the 3,500 teachers who have been locked out unfairly, who are losing pay every day, is only around \$50,000. The beginning salary, for a lot of hard-pressed people who have made teaching their career, is only around \$35,000. There are members opposite who have inferred and said other things. They have not carried out their responsibility to relay the facts, to calm the situation, to do things that would get 69,000 children back to their classrooms. This is an option that remains open to them.

The larger picture that this bill begets is the need for an overall plan that brings peace and stability to the education system as a whole. Again, as I said earlier, there isn't really much prospect that this government, even in its desperation, especially as we see it lurching to the right, to these unproven—and to the extent that

they've been proven, they've been proven wrong—ideas will be the one to execute them. But we're happy to tell them the ingredients. A peace plan means long-term arrangements with the staff at our schools.

The staff at our schools are as tired as anyone of all the provocation, the lack of resources, the inadequate funding that this government has provided. I remind you that these are things that have been identified by independent experts from Ontario and elsewhere. This government stands defrocked when it comes to its education policy. The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education has said clearly that even the policies that were agreed to by all parties that this government tried to move forward were so badly implemented that they didn't benefit the children.

We heard from their own report, Dr Rozanski's commission on funding, that this government has short-changed, has picked the pockets of students in this province, to the tune of \$1.7 billion. That's \$854 for every student, and most of that money remains outstanding to the students in the Toronto board and the Toronto Catholic board as well.

This government has not done its elemental responsibility in education. We find ourselves faced with a bill, compelled to debate, to give it more respect than it deserves, a desperate measure by the government to detract and distract away from those elemental conditions in education in this province today. We have children who have been left behind in classes that have become way too large, thanks to this government.

We have special-needs kids who are still waiting for the money this government promised them and, worse than that, took out ads—not political ads in this case—paid for by this government's appropriation of taxpayer dollars. They actually took out those ads and said they were giving those dollars, finally, to children with special needs. Did that happen? It did not. Across this province there are families bitterly disappointed, because first the Premier, then the minister, and then expensive ads and probably several million dollars worth of education ads on TV, paid for by taxpayers—said the government was finally going to listen to the needs of these particular children whom they've been shortchanging for years. This was being caught at deducting about 40% of what these kids, some in wheelchairs, some with learning disabilities that have been ferreted out by professionals—the solution stood tantalizingly in reach of these kids and their families but was denied by a government with other priorities. Then they had the audacity to dangle in front of these families the prospect that they might finally pay their bills after having made them jump through hoops, fill in forms, stand waiting in line for this funding for months, and in some cases years. It then turned around and took back some of this money.

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That's the kind of cynicism that informs the bill today, the kind of cynicism that the advertising standards council of Canada said was inaccurate claims being made by this government. They don't say that lightly. This is a

completely independent body. It looked at the ads and at the information we provided, and a whole bunch of families across the province told the ad council about the government experiences they had through their schools. This independent body clearly found that this government was at fault and that they were not telling the truth to the people of this province through their advertising. In fact they said, as they do in all these cases, that the ad should be withdrawn.

Did we get an apology from the minister involved? Did we get an acknowledgement that they had made mistakes? No. We had an insistence, as we have today speaking about these 69,000 kids, that they were not wrong.

Well, I can tell you that there are hundreds of families—sadly, they number in the thousands around this province—who were waiting for those funds, who relished the chance to be able to prove the other way, to be able to prove to this government that they can't take that kind of licence.

I don't know what kind of Republican workshops the government members go to or perhaps delegate their staff to go to, or their party workers who spend some \$6 million or \$7 million a year—whatever they do at provincial HQ; I guess they dream up these kinds of schemes. But when those people go to those seminars, they're told, "You can get away with this. You can actually take students in the school system captive to your ambitions on a game-playing level to advance yourself," I think they're getting exceedingly bad advice.

I want to put to this House that there is a far better resolution to this. There is still a chance for the members of this House to acquit themselves on behalf of the children of this province, the students of this province, in a way those children have a right to demand. They have a right to demand that they get first attention from this House.

This government was unprepared to support a regular bargaining process that would let off the pressure and find the interests. In a previous incarnation, they brought in the right to strike and the right to lock out. But they changed the rules recently. They changed the rules. At one time we had 10 lockouts in 20 years, and now we've had 10 in the last five years, and all of them have this tinge, this odour of manipulation around them.

It doesn't make sense that the students are not unsafe. They're still learning in their classrooms. They gain nothing from this bill particularly. The students do not find themselves in a better environment that follows. They don't find themselves with the kind of spirit and enthusiasm that, if the members opposite were relaying anything about what they know about their schools in their ridings, they would agree is exactly and only what we can depend on in terms of the learning of our children. They aren't going to sit in front of a computer; they're going to be interactive with their teachers. And those teachers have to be treated fairly.

We on this side of the House have no compunction about saying that teachers deserve respect. They deserve

not to be political punching bags. They deserve not to be treated in the backhanded fashion the government has treated 3,500 teachers here in Toronto. Those teachers deserve an apology from each of the members of this government.

But there is something they can do. They can still extend a level of respect. They have put themselves on a course to pass a bad bill that will not only delay students getting back into the classroom—apparently, the members opposite are comfortable with that—but will also act as a time-delayed grenade going off in all the schools of this province. It will bring about bad will, because it will change the duties of teachers in an arbitrary fashion. It will put to the cabinet of this government—which, we find out, does things like expropriate \$36 billion in secret. These are the kinds of things cabinet does, and they say, "Trust us." Not one of the provisions that the members opposite read about things like testing and so on is in the bill. Instead, what the cabinet did in the last week in anticipation of this new power is what we're getting from this government: a certain kind of double sense, that they're putting across in this thing, of layers that they hope people will never dig down into to appreciate. This is not a back-to-school bill that the government is having us debate today. This is a desperate back-to-government bill, they hope, for themselves.

I think one of the reasons we're having this certain kind of mood that's been in the House the last couple of days, one of the reasons people are speculating that we may not have an election call in time to have it in the spring season, as most people were anticipating, is that these kinds of tactics don't work very well for the government any more, even when every member of the government is prepared to throw over their particular responsibilities—and they are particular. I believe we all have them in this House. When this government took over funding in 1997, we inherited responsibilities for children in this province, not just to sit back in blind adherence to any perspective that's fed to us but to actually know the difference in what's happening in our schools. That's why we ask every member of the Legislature to go back to school, to do one constructive thing throughout the year toward education and get an A from another member in the Legislature, a public acknowledgement that they had made the effort. Sadly, while I think 22 members have done it, there are members present in this House today who, incredibly, can't find a day. They can't spend a day inside a school, and yet they'll stand up here in defence of this bill. They will stand up here as if they've even seen the conditions they've brought upon the students.

The conditions they brought upon the students in the Toronto Catholic board are conditions of underfunding and insufficient teachers. They would see that. At a Catholic school I was in in Toronto not long ago, they actually have to wrestle—it's a friendly thing—to get enough photocopy paper as they line up at 7:30 in the morning in their particular Ontario for education. It is not an Ontario that offers what most people who came to this

country thought they were getting: a fair opportunity through the education system. Instead, the future they paint for us is turmoil that they inspire in the public education system and incentives to go to the private system elsewhere, if you can afford it and if you want to hivel yourself off. I think most people appreciate and understand, and that's where this government is going to find itself conspicuously out of sync.

The whole point of public education is to find ways for us to work together. Why would you bother becoming more learned? Why would you take on new skills? Why would you learn how to think critically about the place around you? Not just because it advances you and gets you a great job, but because it benefits society. Why do we make it legal for kids to be in school, a law that's being bent by this government right now, as they pull kids out through their own action and inaction? Those kids should be in school. We'll take that step in government to make kids go to school because we believe it has a value.

Let me speak to what they are trying to undermine with this bill, which is the particular, specific value of publicly funded education, education that is accountable to our goal of building better citizens—not what they would have, which is whatever you can get in some elite way off in the corner in terms of education, but actually happening in our publicly funded schools. That is the kind of ideal to which I think almost everyone in this province holds strongly.

In publicly funded education we pool our challenges and opportunities. I have a four-and-a-half-year-old, and it's certainly important to me that she attend a good school. But she may end up being somebody who has needs, and those needs may be significant. Someone else, some of the members opposite, may have a ready-to-learn child who's going to learn, whatever happens. But that's the point of public education. We pool those needs together. We have an ability to do that, and until recent years we were succeeding in a tremendous fashion. The 24 million lost days inspired by this government have not assisted that. The \$1.7 billion that Dr Rozanski says they took out of education, not including the inflation and so on that is meant to be put in every year, that structural \$1.7 billion that they took out for their tax cuts and other things, goes against that grain. It's very serious. It is saying that this government puts a lower priority on public education. They would, in their other bill, put \$500 million toward private schools. They would ignore the underlying conditions they have put in place in terms of turmoil in this province.

1740

Mr Speaker, I put to you very simply that this government has had choices all along in terms of what it wants to do. It has found that many of its remedies simply haven't worked. They haven't been able to increase test scores in almost all grades. In the early years I talked about lost children. The kids being left behind are the grade 3s trying to learn how to read. Those test scores have barely moved. Children who have English as

a second language: this government has cut, in places like Scarborough and Don Mills, a third to half of the assistance they used to get to learn English. Have the members opposite even brought that up in the House? They haven't. What's the result? On their average test scores, those two groups—those in English as a second language are doing worse, and so are children with special needs. It's proof in their own riding that their education system is not attending to the opportunity that I believe everyone in this province, virtually everybody, adheres to and believes should be represented. It's absent from this bill today. We do not have in this bill the kind of goodwill effort that we need to create the education system that people in this province deserve. We have instead a manipulation of the system to promote a political program, which the government is quite within its rights to do—but do it with your own money; do it on your own time. Don't do it in the Toronto Catholic elementary board with these children's interests.

We look forward to this government explaining itself in the five days that it has engineered for this particular debate, that it has made sure—because it's not willing to sit down with the opposition or the third party and find a peaceful solution that would put those kids back in school as early as tomorrow morning. That's a choice they made, and they made the choice by constructing this bill this way. They made the choice by running their election ads in tandem with this particular lockout. They made their choice by not one of them lifting a finger to try and get these kids back to school. Well, I say that just as they make those choices, people around the province, when they get their chance, will make theirs.

I won't conclude on that note, because we have a higher obligation in this House. Every day in this House we will be looking for this government to change its mind, every day we will be looking for them to really put the interests of kids first, and every day we will give them an opportunity to do the right thing.

But as we listen to the members opposite as they put their bill forward in terms that are obviously not what we find on paper, we have not yet had from this government a justification for why they wouldn't vote for the peaceful bill we put forward today. I think we've learned that it is possible for an entire group, in terms of these elected officials, part of the government party, to abdicate their responsibility for no better reason than some faint hope that it might do them some good somewhere down the line.

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): It's a delight to follow the debate on Bill 28 from our colleague for Parkdale-High Park, who has been a champion on behalf of teachers and students since he was elected to this Parliament. Today we see that he has introduced another piece of legislation that would benefit tremendously not only all the teachers and students and parents, but the immediate benefit would be in getting the 69,000 Catholic elementary students back into school.

I only have a few minutes. I don't profess to go into Bill 28 very deeply, but let me go for a minute to the

beginning of the bill, why we are debating it here today and why it was introduced in the first place.

This bill was introduced by the Premier himself because, rightfully so, he had seen fit to get students back into the classroom, and get them into the classroom very quickly. This is a very important piece of legislation, but it unfortunately has been sliding toward the wrong way. Certainly, when the introduction of this particular piece of legislation was debated among the three House leaders, if I am correct, it was agreed that the legislation would be solely to get the students back to the classroom. It was agreed by the three House leaders that we would support it and that the third party would support it as well. We came into this House, and do you know what? The bill was introduced and it was not even close to that particular agreement. That is why we are here today.

If the Premier had stuck to his word, that he wanted to get the school kids back into the classroom as soon as possible, he would have done exactly that, bring in a clean bill, and we probably wouldn't even be here today. We would be electioneering somewhere. Do you know why? Because a few days ago, when the Premier was asked, "Are you going to call an election today or tomorrow?" very clearly—and that was fine, that was fair—the Premier said, "You know, there are other important things to deal with. It's not the time to talk about an election." Was he talking about SARS, another important issue? But he said, "I have to deal with 69,000 kids that are out of the classroom."

Wonderful. I thought that was a very noble gesture that he had espoused to the people of Ontario, those 69,000 kids and their parents. He said, "Forget the election. I want to deal with the issue at hand," and that was to bring those kids back into the classroom. Imagine our surprise when we saw this piece of legislation here: a big wedge. We were surprised that the Premier allowed others apart from himself to bring a bill that was not intended to do exactly what he had said a few days before: to get the 69,000 kids back into the classroom. That is why we can't support it.

It is their own fault. They have tried to manipulate a good idea and a good bill and turn it into a bad one. If they had a very sincere wish to end the debate and appease the teachers and the parents—because they are under a lot of stress—and get the kids back into the classroom, the Premier would have said, "My intent is to end the work-to-rule campaign, get the kids into the classroom, and then we'll deal with some other issues, ideas or views that I may have, or that our platform may include. We'll deal with that at another time." I find that very devious, that when there was an agreement by the three House leaders, the bill we received here does totally the opposite.

I have to compliment Mr Kennedy, the member for Parkdale-High Park, for bringing into this House a very short, clean bill to bring some stability and goodwill to the education system, mainly to get the 69,000 Catholic elementary school kids back into the classroom.

Interjections.

Mr Sergio: But from the comments that I hear from the other side, they don't want any of that. They want to have—and they have the power to do it—the pleasure in a couple of days to go to the public and say, "See what we have done? We have acted. We have cut the right to strike and we have sent the kids back to school." "We forced them," in other words. If they were really sincere in doing what they are saying, they would support the member for Parkdale-High Park's bill.

Interjection.

1750

Mr Sergio: Exactly. We would be doing that.

But I couldn't help listening to Minister of Labour Clark when he said, "Let's get on the right side of the issue." My goodness, what is the right side of the issue? What is it? I would say that the right side of the issue is part I of the wrong bill, but because they have acted in a very devious way, they have inserted part II. And part II has absolutely nothing to do with getting those 69,000 kids back into the classroom—nothing at all. We have said, "Eliminate part II and we are going to support your bill." They refuse to do that.

Today, Mr Kennedy has introduced his own bill doing exactly what the first part of their bill does, and they have been speaking against. Today, Mr Kennedy asked for second and third reading on his bill and you turned him down. That is the problem. Their bill is a very devious bill. It creates more crisis, more confrontation, as they have done for the last seven or eight years. We are saying to you, take away, split, sever your own bill and we are going to support it to get those kids back into the classroom tomorrow, but you're refusing to do that. We say they have ulterior motives. They have another agenda. What will that be? May that be in the best interests of the students? Absolutely not. Is that in the best interests of the teachers and parents? Absolutely not.

We are saying to the government that we are at a very particular time and they want to use this particular time to their best advantage. Let me tell you something. Let me say to the Premier and the members on the government who are in the House today that this is not going to work to their benefit. This is not going to work to their benefit because the frustration of the teachers, parents and students is so thick you can cut it with a butcher's knife, and it's your own doing. The crisis, the confrontation and the cuts you have created since 1995 are coming home to roost now. The teachers, the unions, the parents and the students wouldn't be in this situation if it wasn't because of their own doing.

Now at the 11th hour they are still confronting the House, the teachers, the students and the parents with a very convoluted bill which purposely was drawn in this particular way. If they had had the intent of getting the 69,000 kids back into school, they would have brought a bill which would have dealt solely and exclusively with ending the work-to-rule and getting the teachers and the kids back into the classroom.

The second part of this bill demonstrates that their intent was the total and complete opposite. They say,

"The first part does this, and the second part, we're going to give them seven days. If they don't reach an agreement within seven days, we are going to give them an arbitrator, and if that doesn't happen, then we are going to select one, because we want to make sure that the after-school programs are back." You know what? The after-school programs were alive and well prior to their own cuts and especially after bringing in the new funding formula. That's when they created the problem. That is when the after-school programs were eliminated. They were doing very well before.

I think it's time for the government to realize it's now time to make some amends and support the bill which has been introduced by our colleague and which has been debated and supported by our caucus and our leader, Mr Dalton McGuinty. He says, "Look, our intent here is to get the 69,000 kids back into school." Mr McGuinty was in here the other day saying to the Premier, "This is what you said. This is what you want to do. This is what we will support. Put it into the House in this particular form and you will have our support." They have refused.

We are saying again today, to the Premier and the members on the government side, if your real intent is—and you still have time—to get the 69,000 kids back into the classroom, support Mr Kennedy's bill. It is the bill that will help end the lockout and get the students back into the classroom.

The Acting Speaker: Comments and questions.

Mr Marchese: Unfortunately the New Democrat here, Rosario Marchese, the education critic, will not be able to do his hour leadoff today. But tomorrow at 3:45, God willing, if Eves doesn't call the election before that, I'll be back to debate Bill 28, including commenting on the back-to-work legislation, the so-called clean bill of the Liberal Party. So tune in tomorrow at 3:45.

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): It is a pleasure to join the debate and comment this afternoon. The member from Parkdale-High Park and the member from York West spoke on this bill, and the member from Parkdale-High Park challenged members on the government side as to his record of visiting the schools or our record. I can certainly challenge the member from Parkdale-High Park to compare his record with my record. I've visited most every school in my riding. I've been to most of their graduations and I've talked to them about all kinds of issues, about politics.

Not only schools; he can compare his record with my record in visiting universities and colleges. In fact, last year when I was the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, I did consultations about training and apprenticeship, which is so much needed. I was quite pleased to do that and I know the report is underway.

It is the opposition's fearmongering—they talked about the double cohort, how the kids won't get any room in the classes. I'm so happy to report back to you and to this House that every willing, able and qualified child who wants to go to university or college to get their

higher education—we have the resources, we have the funding and we have the agreement from the colleges and universities. I think the kids deserve a chance and we, through this bill, want to make sure that the lockout ends and the labour difficulties end.

In fact, my own niece is a teacher in the Peel Board of Education, a very well-respected, very hard-working teacher.

Mr Marchese: How much is she getting?

Mr Gill: She's getting good money, she tells me; she's very happy with it. In fact, we were there giving \$950 million to the Peel Board of Education.

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): I am pleased to comment on the remarks of the members for Parkdale-High Park and York West in response to the government bill to, so-called, end the strike—not strike, but end the—

Mr Marchese: A lockout is a strike, though. It's OK.

Mr Patten: —the lockout of the teachers by the board. Of course, it is always within the context of what is happening during the day. It's quite blatant and quite obvious that the government of the day sees an opportunity here to push forward what they really want. What they really want is no strikes at all or no opportunities for teachers to engage in any kind of meaningful bargaining. This government has a history of wanting, for some reason, to put it to the teachers, and encouraging a board, as they have in terms of the lockout, with legislation, but legislation that doesn't just deal with this particular situation here. All sides of the House said they would be supportive of dealing with a back-to-work piece of legislation for these 69,000. But here's an opportunity to squeeze in, pitch it to all the teachers across the total province and cause further rancour in the ranks of teachers who already feel as if they've been the recipients of disrespect time and again by this particular government.

1800

We could move forward even with this bill if they wanted to. We could meet tonight, we could meet tomorrow, we could meet tomorrow night. I don't see that happening, because there has been a change in the political winds and they do not really want to see a settlement at this time.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments? The member for Northumberland.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): This will be impartial.

Mr Galt: Thanks very much. I appreciate that comment from the member for St Catharines. He has a very keen mind and really recognizes where things are going to come from in speeches.

I can't help but think, as I listen to the comments from the members of the opposition and the speeches I've heard, that all they can be in favour of is work-to-rule. They're not in favour of students. They're not for the students and our young people; they're for unions. They're hard on the students, soft on unions.

I've been sitting here trying to figure out whom the Liberal MPPs really support: the Dalton McGuinty who,

as an MPP, brought in a private member's bill to eliminate teachers' strikes or the Dalton McGuinty who's been manipulated by the unions—

Interjection.

Hon Mr Galt: —the leader of the official opposition, how's that?—the Dalton McGuinty who has been manipulated by the unions and has come out with this Mickey Mouse thing in their platform. Which Dalton McGuinty will you be standing behind in this upcoming election, the one who had some intestinal fortitude to bring forward a private member's bill that would make it illegal for teachers to strike, or the Dalton McGuinty who's been manipulated and re-formed into what the unions want him to be? I'm waiting to see just what will happen. I have a feeling I know what will happen, and I think it's most unfortunate that that kind of manipulation has gone on with an individual.

I come back to this particular bill and what's been said over here. I think it's most unfortunate that members in the opposition do not put students first and unions don't put students first. Teachers put students first, parents put students first and our government puts students first. It's time that the opposition put students first.

The Acting Speaker: Response?

Mr Kennedy: It may be that two minutes was unfair for the members opposite—whether for Northumberland or Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale, and of course we will hear later on from the member for Trinity-Spadina—to explain how it is that a government that has taken away 24 million days from the students of this province in their two terms in office, now in their dying days in office—and maybe the death is going to take longer—is going to find a way to solve that. They have been the contributors to that. They have made that happen all around the province. They have failed to do their duty to keep kids in school, to keep teachers satisfied and focused on their jobs, as they deserve to be. They have failed to protect teachers. This bill they put forward punishes teachers. That's not the job of this government. The job of this government is to motivate the teachers of this province, and it has failed to do that miserably.

We have a senseless lockout that started eight days ago, which has begotten a senseless bill that would take us another five days. We sit here in the Legislature being abused for the public interest, not being used for the public interest. We have members here who cannot grasp that our job is to make things better for people out there. It is not to feather nests, it is not to advance narrow agendas, it is not to support expensive TV ads, whether paid for by the taxpayers or the Progressive Conservative Party. These are real lives of people out there that you're fiddling with in this particular bill, this senseless lockout followed by this senseless bill—not required and not needed.

What would have been needed is some guts on the part of the members opposite to stand up in this House and say, "Yes, we would vote for a bill that would have the best chance of bringing some peace back and restore and retain dignity for the teachers who are involved," because

the rhetoric they put in front of us today can only do the opposite.

The Acting Speaker: It being past six of the clock, the motion to adjourn is deemed to have been made.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Pursuant to standing order 37(a), the member for Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington has given her notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to her question given by the Minister of Community, Family and Children's services concerning rights information for children.

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): The reason I have requested this late show is that I was very disappointed with the response the minister gave me yesterday when I asked questions about the fact that rights information for children in care facilities in the province of Ontario was not available. In fact, I was surprised when I reviewed—and Hansard is a testimony to my statement—that the minister really had no idea of the point of my question. Initially she referenced the fact that a number of steps had been taken to ensure that children in the care of children's aid societies were well cared for and protected. Then, in her latter response, she talked about a fast-track information system and about hiring child protection workers. Clearly the issue is around providing rights information.

There have been seven deaths of children in care, children in the charge of this province. Given that seven children have died in care and that five separate inquests have indicated the need for better access to the office of the child advocate, I think this would be a priority for the Ministry of Community, Family and Children's Services. I am profoundly disappointed that the minister would not be aware of this crucial issue. The recent inquest into the death of Stephanie Jobin, a child who at one time lived in my riding, specifically addressed the issue of rights information.

The minister suggested in her initial response that if I had material, she would be very happy to look at it. I say to the minister this evening that one of things that sparked my attention in this particular issue was the fact that I received a copy of a letter that was sent to her by Susan Fraser on this particular issue. So I know that you were made aware of this issue on May 6, 2003. I have a copy of the letter here, if the minister should need a copy of her own correspondence.

I first heard concerns about the office of the child advocate when I met with parents involved with the section 30 needs lawsuit. They told me that the child advocate had been prevented from testifying in that particular trial, which strikes me as very strange.

I then received two letters, one from Susan Fraser and one from a former children's advocate. I'm alarmed that a former child advocate would write to me and say, "I know that the present government has very little concern for the rights of children. I am afraid that it has begun an assault on the whole concept and an attempt to remove or emasculate the protection legislation. And further, I request that you keep a close watch on developments around the Office of Child and Family Service Advocacy."

That is what I intend to do. On behalf of our most vulnerable children, I called the child advocate to inquire about the questions raised in the letter. Awkwardly, she had to report that in fact she doesn't know why rights materials have not been made available.

Minister, you have a responsibility to these vulnerable children. When your government can spend millions of dollars on partisan advertising, why is it that essential rights information is not available to these children? They deserve posters. You should publish an annual report and invest in a Web site that is youth-friendly and accessible. This information isn't a frill. This isn't a luxury for children in care. This is mandated.

Clearly, your response to me yesterday indicated that you had no idea what I was talking about. The Jobin inquest confirmed that rights materials aren't being provided to kids in care, and they likely aren't being informed of their rights. This is not a children's aid issue; this is an issue of children in group homes. These children don't have parents; the state is their parent. The number of children in care has doubled under your watch. These children need someone to look out for them, to let them know they count, that they matter and that they have rights. Yet for three years you have blocked this essential information from section 108 of the act that is mandated.

1810

How regularly do you contact the child advocate? Have you ever met with her? How is it that these important issues have escaped your attention? My only purpose in coming here tonight and pressing this issue is to ensure that this rights information gets to children in care in provincial facilities. I would also hope that you ensure that it is youth-appropriate and prepared by professionals. Our most vulnerable children are entitled and deserve this—

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Thank you, Minister, you have five minutes to reply.

Hon Brenda Elliott (Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services): When the question was asked of me yesterday in the House, I admit I was puzzled. It appeared to be a question about posters and brochures. Normally when a backbencher such as my colleague across the way gets a chance to ask a question—it's not very often—it's usually about something of a little more import.

I thought she might have wanted to ask me about child protection; how we've increased that by 185% to \$1 billion. I thought she might have wanted to ask me about

one of our workfare programs, like Learning, Earning and Parenting. I thought she might have wanted to ask us about autism, since we're the first government in the history of Ontario ever to put money into autism, with a program that is going from zero to now nearly \$100 million. But no, it turns out that the question was about posters.

So I went back to get a bit of information. Here's what I found out. First of all, all residential services do have posters and brochures. True, we are working on new posters. The information on the current posters now is correct, but the office hours of the child advocate have been extended by 15 minutes. So I guess we need to include that on the new poster. There has been a correction of the ministry name to reflect changes made last year. So we are working on that.

Now—I also think this is really very relevant, and it's unfortunate that the opposition member across the way didn't do the homework to find this out—the Ernie Eves government not only relies on posters and brochures to make children know their rights, but for children's residential services to receive their licence there are rules for them to follow regarding the notification of children's rights. When a child enters a residential facility, one of the first things they must do is notify the child of his or her rights. They must then document in the child's files that that they have been notified. If they don't do this, they can have their licence revoked.

So I am in the process of making sure that whatever appropriate posters are being reviewed.

I think it is important, though, that in the question that was asked yesterday there was a reference to an annual report. I am accused of preventing an annual report being done. Here are the words: "prevented her from doing the last three years." Well, there's never been a report from the annual report. That is perfectly appropriate if it was to be done, but it's not a requirement, and certainly the last thing that would ever come from our office would be something preventing a body like the child advocate or any other agency or member of community, family and children's services—to not do that if that was required. That's unthinkable.

So if there's anybody in the Liberal caucus who may be listening, they might want to vet the questions that come from a backbencher like this across the way, to make sure that there's substance there and that that person has done their homework, so they know what's really going on. However, we've become accustomed to this sort of thing on this side of the House. My colleague from Elgin-Middlesex-London made some remarks here in the House on May 14th. I have sent a letter to that particular member saying the information that you shared with the House was indeed incorrect. I have publicly asked him to withdraw those remarks. That has been noted in his local newspaper. Have I heard a word? Has he done the honourable thing and withdrawn those incorrect remarks? No, he has not. So when an opportunity is given in this House during question period for substantive questions on very important issues, what we get instead is political twisting, a resort to innuendo and

information shared that is not quite the whole story. I'm sorry that our constituents unfortunately need to tune in after six of the clock to get the other side of the story, but I'm pleased with the opportunity to share that with the House tonight.

MEAT INSPECTION

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown):

Pursuant to standing order 37(a), the member for Elgin-Middlesex-London has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Agriculture and Food concerning veterinarian audits of provincial abattoirs. The member has up to five minutes for his presentation.

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): I'm pleased to see that the minister is in the House, but it would be nice to see if she has the ability to put down her newspaper, stop reading and deal with important issues. I find it disappointing and frightening that for the second time in a week, the Minister of Agriculture did not have a clue about or listen to what she had been asked in this Legislature.

Last week, the member for Chatham-Kent Essex asked the minister about the challenges facing the rendering industry. The minister answered by talking about testing and showed no understanding of his question. She went on to say that she had been consulting for eight weeks. What did eight weeks of consultation have to do with the rendering industry? It was more like she was talking about nutrient management.

Today, I asked the minister a question about the abattoirs, the veterinary auditors in this province. But I did not ask the minister a question about BSE. My question had nothing to do with BSE. My question was specifically about the fact that there had been no veterinary auditors in this province monitoring the 204 abattoirs since the end of March. That's what I asked about. I didn't ask about BSE.

I quote from their request for proposal: "There are 14 food safety areas of the standards of compliance that are audited to determine the final plant rating. These include plant construction and design, waste handling and disposal, water sanitation, equipment and maintenance, pest control, temperature control, transport, personal hygiene, product flow, manufacturing controls, packaging, labeling and records. In addition, the auditors assess the humane handling of animals and occupational health and safety."

With my question today, though, the minister came back talking about 1,000 tests, the fact there was no BSE in the province. She talked about lab testing and she talked about surveillance. Minister, listen to the questions when they're asked of you, because I didn't ask that of you. We have had no veterinary auditors working in this province since March 31. You do not have to have BSE in this province to audit. The auditors review specific issues. It is on their word that abattoirs in this province are licensed on an annual basis. These auditors are on top of the inspection pile.

Sources in your ministry contacted us out of concern. You may think that you can put a gag order on them, but it doesn't work because they're appalled at what's going on within your ministry. These people tell us that this RFP had been sitting on your desk since January, yet you have the gall to tell me that I should be ashamed of myself. Twice in this Legislature today—when senior members of your ministry call my offices, talking about serious risks and oversights, I have an obligation to speak out and ask questions. They are concerned about the fact that we have had no veterinary auditors since March and we won't have any until June. You are the one who should be ashamed of yourself, Minister.

And speaking of gag orders, another fascinating clause in this request for proposal is section 14: "The auditors shall not disclose or use any information that the ministry cannot or may not wish to disclose." May not wish to disclose? This whole "may not wish to disclose," I ask you, what the heck is that all about? The fact that this RFP is late is obviously something you would not wish to disclose to the public. You don't want public the fact that you sat on your hands for four months. You've compromised our entire meat industry by not having these audits undertaken.

Our agricultural markets are based on the cornerstone of consumer confidence. We've said it over and over again, the provincial auditor has said it to you over and over again: consumer confidence is based on inspection and auditing beyond reproach. We have had, and we have the potential to have, one of the world's most healthy, vigorous, vibrant and cutting-edge agricultural sectors right here in Ontario. But that sector relies on its ministry and its minister to promote and protect it. Protecting that industry is exactly what this is all about. Food inspection, food safety and auditing: this instills the confidence in our consumers. The consumer has to know that when they walk into the grocery store, they have the safest, healthiest, most stringently regulated products they can get their hands on.

Minister, you can't waste money on food safety inspection. It's not bad enough that your government is ideologically bent on privatization and contracting out when these employees should be public servants, full-time employees of the crown with the full weight and protection of the crown behind them, but you can't even get your act together to get the contracts renewed on time or get the requests for proposal out on time. The Minister of Agriculture is the one who should be ashamed of herself.

I'm asking you once again: what have you done to ensure that this industry is not being jeopardized by allowing a three-month absence of veterinary auditors in the abattoirs of this province?

The Acting Speaker: The minister has up to five minutes to reply.

1820

Hon Helen Johns (Minister of Agriculture and Food):

I am very pleased to be able to talk to my agricultural community this evening about the issues that are important to them, and of course the issue of beef and beef

safety, animal safety and food safety. All of those issues are incredibly important to them this week.

But first to my beef producers in the province, who I know are challenged by the events of the last couple of weeks, let me say that I am working hard on your behalf to ensure that you have a voice at the cabinet table, that you have a voice that is supporting you with the federal government to ensure that you have a voice that will protect you and move this ban off as quickly as possible so that we can get back to a life where you can sell your product and where there is a market for your product. I know this is a very big financial constraint for you, and I'm going to do what it takes to ensure that we change this as quickly as possible. I was talking to the federal government today, and I will continue to talk with the federal government, the Alberta government and the Ministries of Agriculture all across the country, because you need to have that representation.

For the consumers of the province, I have been very careful in the House to let you know over the last two weeks that we are doing the right things in Ontario when it comes to food safety. I'm concerned about your children and the food they get at their table. I'm concerned about doing the best to ensure that you have safe food. That's why over the last couple of weeks I've been able to say to you that we have done many tests—1,000 tests, as you have heard; we have done incredible work on it. We've invested money in the labs, in the new equipment we have at the University of Guelph. Our research is showing you, and it's showing me, that our food in Ontario is safe. When they ask me questions that tie around that or move further out from that, that's my message to you, because it's important that you know that the research we do in this province is research so that you know your family is eating the safest food in Ontario.

We had a question today in the House about why an RFP isn't out on time. I will tell you today that we have done testing—in fact, you need to know that this Conservative government brought in food safety in 1995. When the other two governments were elected, there wasn't a food safety program. We brought in legislation. We put more dollars into food safety. We consolidated this into the Ministry of Agriculture so we could do the right thing for the people of Ontario.

Let me say that we have tested every abattoir in the province over the last number of years. Last year, we tested every abattoir. The year has just started. It started in April of this year. I guarantee the people of Ontario that every abattoir will be licensed this year. It will be looked at by a trained vet. It will have all of the work done to it so that I can guarantee you that the food that comes out of those abattoirs is safe, it's safe for your family and it's safe for my young boys, so that we can do the right thing in the province of Ontario.

Interjection.

Hon Mrs Johns: The question becomes: when should the RFP go out? I don't think you care about that necessarily, but let me tell you, we had a three-year proposal. It has ended. For the last three years, the work has been done. Every abattoir has been tested. Anyone who doesn't get an A rating has the ministry come in and work with them to move them up to an A rating. If you live in rural Ontario, you've seen those changes. You've seen abattoirs close down because they couldn't meet the proposals. You've seen abattoirs have to make changes. If you're in rural Ontario, you know very clearly that that has happened. That is the work of this government: improving the food safety of the province.

Are we going to do this next year? Absolutely. Every year I move to increase these standards so that we do more and more to be able to ensure our food safety.

So what you've heard today is, we have vets in the province who are looking at every abattoir. The federal government is looking at the federally inspected plants in the province, which kill the most beef in the province. We have surveillance teams. We have lab teams. We have training programs. This government has put more into the food safety system than any other government, because they didn't even bother to have a food safety system in the province.

So let me say, trust me, I'm going to do the right thing for the farmers and for the consumers of the province of Ontario, because Ernie Eves cares and I care.

The Acting Speaker: It being after 6 of the clock, the motion to adjourn is deemed to have carried. This House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow afternoon.

The House adjourned at 1825.

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of Ontario

Fourth Session, 37th Parliament

Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario

Quatrième session, 37^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Wednesday 28 May 2003

Mercredi 28 mai 2003

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 28 May 2003

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 28 mai 2003

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HELICOPTER SERVICES

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): It seems that the government's motto of "Ontario is open for business" doesn't apply in the case of the Ministry of Natural Resources when it comes to providing helicopter services. The northern providers, those providers who operate out of northern Ontario, are tired of this government giving contracts to out-of-province providers. Helicopter companies from Sudbury, Cochrane, Wawa, Longlac and North Bay are tired that this government is not allowing Ontario providers first opportunity. In other provinces, such as Quebec, Alberta, Manitoba and British Columbia, there is a policy in place where you hire in-province providers first; not so in Ontario.

Let me give you the example, the latest bungling by this government when it comes to giving contracts. Gateway Helicopters out of North Bay and Sudbury bid on a contract for a LongRanger. They were overlooked for an out-of-province provider at twice the cost, only because the out-of-province provider happened to be close to the scene.

Let me tell you: this government talks the talk about it being open for business, but it doesn't walk the walk. This government should know that in Ontario, Ontarians deserve first crack at contracts.

DOUG KENNEDY

Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South): It is with great sadness that I inform this House that Ontario has lost a distinguished former member of provincial Parliament. Doug Kennedy, MPP for Peel South and later Mississauga South, passed away on May 26 in his 87th year.

Doug was a graduate of the Ontario Agricultural College. He also served as a captain in the Canadian army during World War II. Doug was first elected in 1955 to the South Peel Board of Education, and served as its chairman. He was also chairman of the Toronto Township Hydro Commission.

In 1967, Doug was elected to the Ontario Legislature, where he served with honour until his retirement in 1985.

He was parliamentary assistant to the ministers of education and intergovernmental affairs, and also served as chief government whip.

Always a gentleman with a smile on his face, Doug was also a gentle person—a true gift in politics. Doug excelled as an advocate for his constituents. He was uniquely dedicated to looking after people and could always be counted on to follow through in helping anyone with a problem.

Doug leaves his beloved wife, Kay, their cherished adult children, Sue, John, Pat and Janet, and their families, including 10 grandchildren and 12 great-grandchildren. One of 10 children in his own family, Doug is also survived by five brothers, Arthur, Ted, Dick, Hal and Don.

Doug and Kay can be very proud of their fine family and his immense contribution to our community, province and country. He leaves a wonderful legacy of compassion and dedication to his people throughout all his years in elected public office. We will miss him greatly.

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): You just can't trust Ernie Eves. Eves paid to have a \$600,000, 30-page brochure included in every issue of Maclean's magazine in Ontario. It makes empty boasts about infrastructure spending, perhaps to distract drivers from crumbling roads and dangerous bridges. On page 9 is a glowing tribute by Terry and Roger Lavergne: "Roger has been a resident since the facility opened," at an Extendicare. "They look after me very well," he says." That's a quote from Roger Lavergne.

Here's what Terry Lavergne wrote to me recently:

"Since that interview, staff has been cut twice. We've been told to expect more cuts in October.... There are nails coming through the floor tiles, large holes in the wall. He just gets one bath per week.

"Over the year that my husband has lived at Extendicare, our opinion of this brand new facility has changed drastically. I'm very, very unhappy to have given any positive publicity to this abysmal situation."

Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberals have a plan to help Roger and Terry Lavergne. We'll set high standards for nursing homes and regularly inspect them to make sure those standards are being met. We will also outlaw self-promotional government advertising. Voters have a choice: they can choose Ernie Eves putting

himself first with a \$400-million binge of government advertising, or they can choose Dalton McGuinty. Choose change, choose government you can trust.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): And don't choose Liberals without a plan.

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: How's it going in Windsor? Things are going well in Windsor, I see.

I just want to report to the House some good developments that are happening up in our particular part of the province. As some of the members of the House here may know, the federal government now owns but two hospitals across all of Canada, as far as federal hospitals. One of those is in Kingston, Ontario, and, as the good member from Kingston would know, serves much of the way of services for people in the aboriginal community across Ontario. The other one is up in Moose Factory, in my riding.

The federal government is wanting to get out of the hospital business, and quite frankly I couldn't agree more. The federal government in my view does not do as good a job as a province does when it comes to providing hospital services and overall providing a continuum of care that is necessary in our modern health care system.

This week in Timmins, leaders from across the James Bay communities, the Chapleau communities, are coming together in order to discuss where we go from here. If we're going to move from the federal system to provincial system, how do we make sure that at the end of the day a couple of very basic things happen: (1) that treaty and aboriginal rights are respected—and I believe that can be done in the provincial system—(2) that the best possible care is offered to the citizens of the James Bay communities so that they are treated on par with citizens across this province when it comes to not only hospital services but long-term care and community mental health as well as substance abuse?

We look forward to the process that will ensue, and we'll make sure that the provincial government does what it has to do to make sure that the people of northern Ontario and James Bay get the best possible hospital system.

1340

ROSS POWLESS

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): I wish to stand today to recognize the passing of a Canadian legend. Ross Powless, a member of the Canadian Lacrosse Hall of Fame, passed away at the age of 76. His reputation as an all-star lacrosse player, gentleman and mentor will live on forever in the hearts and minds of those who knew him. Ross was from Six Nations.

Ross Powless distinguished himself by treating others with the respect they deserved and making his time and wisdom available to those who would seek it.

Throughout his illustrious career as a player, Ross won four Canadian lacrosse championships with the Peterborough Timbermen from 1951 to 1954, including the MVP award in 1953 and the Tom Longboat award for two separate years as the top Indian athlete in Canada.

Ross also coached the Brantford Warriors to the Canadian Senior B championship in 1968, and the Rochester Chiefs to a Can-Am Lacrosse League championship in 1969.

In 1974, Ross coached six of his sons—he had 14 children in all with his wife, Margaret—on the Ontario First Nations team, which captured the All-Indian Nations championship cup.

Ross was committed to his community. He was instrumental in starting Six Nations minor lacrosse and hockey leagues and he also served as a First Nations government councillor for eight years.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr Monte Kwinter (York Centre): A number of highly respected experts reviewed the Eves budget in detail and they say that Ernie Eves is running a deficit. The Dominion Bond Rating Service says the Eves Magna budget actually shows a "deficit of \$1.9 billion." The TD Bank found that the Tory budget is hiding a real deficit of \$2 billion this year. Standard and Poor's says that Ernie's inflated asset sales numbers are "inconsistent with" his "stated objective to take the necessary steps to balance the budget."

The experts agree: Ernie Eves is running a deficit and making promises he can't keep. It's hard to trust Ernie Eves to tell you what he will do, because he won't tell you what he'll sell. It could be the LCBO, it could be Hydro One, it could be TV Ontario, it could be, as Christina Blizzard of the Toronto Sun speculated today, the Pickering nuclear reactor. Something is going out the door in a fire sale.

Voters don't need to play guessing games with Dalton McGuinty. He has laid out exactly how he will pay for his plan. Dalton McGuinty has painstakingly shown how we will hire 8,000 more nurses, invest in the auto sector and lower class sizes, without raising taxes or running a deficit.

A forensic auditor and two senior economists reviewed our income and spending projections. They agree that our plan is prudent and fiscally responsible. Warren Jestin of Scotiabank wrote, "Your commitment to balancing the budget is both reassuring and an essential ingredient in long-term fiscal planning."

Economist David Hall wrote, "Your fiscal plan produces at least balanced budgets and a prudent reserve every year."

The voters of Ontario have a choice: they can choose Ernie Eves and return to billion-dollar deficits and broken promises, or they can choose Dalton McGuinty and responsible government you can trust. Choose change.

WASTE MANAGEMENT

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): I rise today to speak on an issue that is very important to my constituents in Lambton-Kent-Middlesex. Having attended a number of public meetings over the past several months dealing with applications for expansions of landfill sites, the importation of hazardous materials from other jurisdictions and the transportation of Ontario garbage through my riding, my constituents are concerned.

Our government is committed to enhancing environmental protection in Ontario, especially in the area of hazardous waste management. In fact, our hazardous waste regulations are now the toughest in the province's history and imports actually decreased by 31% between 1999 and 2001. But we can do better, and the way to do that is by dealing with these products in a way that reduces the need to landfill in the first place.

More than two years ago, I wrote Toronto city council expressing the concerns of my constituents about exporting their garbage, and yet the trucks continue to roll through my riding. Recently I wrote to my colleague the Minister of the Environment to suggest an examination of alternatives in the management of our waste stream. I believe that as a government we can and should play a more visionary and proactive role in promoting alternatives to landfilling. After all, I do not have to tell anyone in this House that landfilling is 18th-century technology.

I believe our government should demonstrate world-wide leadership by encouraging and developing a 21st-century approach. It is an approach that requires meaningful recycling programs, comprehensive composting initiatives and a thorough examination of producing energy from waste technologies, which by the way are being used right now in many jurisdictions around the world.

PREMIER'S RECORD

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): Ernie Eves is Ernie Eves's worst critic. Let's hear what Ernie Eves said about his own platform.

Here's one about how Ontario can't afford mortgage deductibility. Ernie Eves said, "When I presented the cost to the Premier of the day, he asked me what drugs I was on. 'You can't go there.'"

Here's Ernie Eves on banning teachers' strikes. Eves said that this type of "dogmatic approach" is the politics of the past.

How about this one on the private school tax credit? "These tax credits should be available only to parents whose children are in schools that teach the curriculum set out by the Ministry of Education."

What about Ernie Eves on jailing the homeless? Here's what Ernie Eves said, "Homelessness is not a crime."

Frankly, it's impossible to tell what Ernie Eves believes and just what he pretends to believe. As Ernie Eves himself said about the very ideas in his platform, "When we're throwing out these neat solutions scratched on the back of an envelope, we might want to think about what the cost is and if we really want to go there." Well, well, well.

Let's contrast that with Dalton McGuinty, who has laid out a plan that he stands behind. It will mean excellence in education, growing strong and safe communities, achieving our economic potential, the health care we need and government that works for all of the people of Ontario for a change. Ontario Liberals believe this. Dalton McGuinty. Choose change. Choose real change. Vote Liberal.

AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE FOR
FIGHTING CRIME

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I rise today to publicly honour three organizations and individuals in my riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka who are recipients of the Ontario Crime Control Commission's 2003 Awards of Excellence For Fighting Crime.

First, Muskoka Victim Services was nominated because of their 24-hour-a-day, seven-days-a-week response to emergencies. Working with the OPP, fire departments and emergency health care services, they provide crisis assistance, support and referrals to community services. Led by executive director Ginny Kernohan and program director Maureen Trimble, volunteers responded to 831 calls and served 1,866 victims between 1998 and 2002.

Second, Mr Tom Berry was nominated because of his work with the Alternatives for Youth in Muskoka program, where he has been program coordinator since July 1999. With Mr Barry's determination community justice circles, based on native sentencing circle models, were developed. Between April 2000 and December 2002, 86 youths have been referred to the circles. Only seven have reoffended.

Third, Mr Lyle Cathcart was nominated because of his work as president of Bracebridge Community Policing Committee Inc. Under his leadership, this committee has brought the victim crisis assistance and referral service program to the district of Muskoka to support victims of crime and initiated the inmate volunteer program, which encourages pro-social attitudes and behaviours among volunteer inmates who assist charities in Muskoka and beyond.

I would ask that all members of the House join me in congratulating the three recipients from Parry Sound-Muskoka.

REQUEST FOR OPINION

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I beg to inform the House that pursuant to section 30 of the Members' Integrity Act, 1994, I have today laid upon the table a

request from the member for Kenora-Rainy River to the Honourable Coulter Osborne, Integrity Commissioner, for an opinion on whether the Honourable Ernie Eves, Premier of Ontario, and the Honourable Tony Clement, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, have contravened the act or a Ontario parliamentary convention.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): Pursuant to standing order 59(a) and 60(a), I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on estimates on the estimates selected and not selected by the standing committee for consideration.

Clerk at the Table (Mr Todd Decker): The standing committee on estimates presents the committee's report as follows:

Pursuant to standing order 59, your committee has selected the estimates 2003-04 of the following offices and ministries for consideration:

Ministry of Finance: 5 hours;

Ministry of Education: 10 hours;

Ministry of Energy: 15 hours;

Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities: 7 hours, 30 minutes;

Ministry of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation: 7 hours, 30 minutes;

Ministry of Agriculture and Food: 7 hours, 30 minutes;

Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care: 7 hours, 30 minutes;

Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing: 7 hours, 30 minutes;

Ministry of Community, Family and Children's Services, 7 hours, 30 minutes;

Ministry of Consumer and Business Services, 7 hours, 30 minutes;

Ministry of Citizenship, 7 hours, 30 minutes.

Pursuant to standing order 60, the estimates, 2003-04, of the following ministries and offices not selected for consideration—

Interjection: Dispense.

The Speaker: Dispense? Dispensed.

Pursuant to standing order 60(b), the report of the committee is deemed to be received, and the estimates of the ministries and offices named therein as not being selected for consideration by the committee are deemed to be concurred in.

1350

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

GRAVESITES OF FORMER PREMIERS ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 SUR LES LIEUX DE SÉPULTURE DES ANCIENS PREMIERS MINISTRES

Mr Peters moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 67, An Act to preserve the gravesites of former premiers of Ontario / Projet de loi 67, Loi visant à conserver les lieux de sépulture des anciens premiers ministres de l'Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): This bill permits the Minister of Culture to mark the gravesites of former Premiers of Ontario and permits the minister to make agreements for the care and preservation of such gravesites. In marking the gravesites, the minister shall comply with the bylaws of the cemetery where the gravesite is located and shall respect the wishes of the family of the deceased Premier.

RON MCNEIL

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): I'd like to seek unanimous consent to make some remarks, and for other members of other parties to make some remarks, about the passing of Ron McNeil from Elgin, a former MPP.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

Hon Mr Sterling: Ron McNeil was a member of this Legislature for 29 years, from 1958 to 1987. I got to know Ron between 1977 and 1987 when we served co-incidentally here in the legislative chamber, and I gained a tremendous amount of respect for Ron.

Ron was a man of small physical stature but really was a man of great integrity. He was rather quiet—he didn't speak in the Legislature very often—but he was really very much respected by all members of the House. When he did speak, he was listened to very, very closely, because at that point in time he not only had the experience but the wisdom of his years of service and was recognized for that.

Ron was parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Agriculture for, I believe, five or six years from, I would guess, about 1977 to 1985. During that period of time, Lorne Henderson, the MPP for Lambton, was the Minister of Agriculture. In a lot of ways, the two were inseparable during that period of time, and they created quite a sight when seen together. Lorne was a very large and very tall man, and was one of those people from our

agricultural community who had developed very, very large hands from milking cows when he was a young lad, and Ron was a very diminutive character. At any rate, Ron had a great sense of humour as well.

He was known in his constituency for doing tremendous work. I could never forget Premier Davis saying during a caucus meeting that there were two members in the caucus who wrote more letters to him as Premier—five times as many letters I think the number was—than the other members, and the two were Jack Johnson from Wellington and Ron McNeil. Both of them were known very much as constituency people. Ron was very much tied to the agricultural community and was very well respected for that.

He loved the area he represented around Elgin, where he lived. Ron really surprised us in about 1986 or 1987. He was a bachelor until he was about 65 years of age. One week he came back to the Legislature and let us know he'd gotten married on the weekend. We just didn't picture this as happening that late in his life. Nobody was even aware that Ron was courting Doris, who unfortunately predeceased him in the year 2000, but Ron was very happy during his period of marriage with Doris. We all got to know both of them very well and we loved them both.

One of the other things about Ron was that he had this self-deprecating humour that he engaged in when he was talking about himself and his constituents. If you would bear with me, Mr Speaker, I just want to read a few remarks which I think give the Legislature some idea of Mr McNeil, both from his standpoint and from that of the opposition. I'm going to read from Mr Nixon, who was the finance minister in 1987 when Ron was celebrating his 29th anniversary here in the Legislature. This is from the Hansard:

"The two of us have often participated in debates in this House.... I have the greatest respect for the member for Elgin's experience and his ability to put forward the judgement based on that experience associated with his long-term responsibilities in his local community and particularly in the agricultural community. I have special reason to feel very warm towards our" relationship.

"The member for Bellwoods indicated that the member for Elgin is one of the few Conservatives in southwestern Ontario, but it was not always thus. While I would say he is philosophically established in the right party, in his early days he was quite influenced by the great Mitchell F. Hepburn, who was also a representative from Elgin. He even messed around just slightly with the Liberals until better judgement put him on the straight and narrow, which he has followed ever since.

"I have always had a feeling of some regret that the Liberals were not more aggressive in seeing that the member for Elgin was a candidate for us, but sometimes you miss out on the good ones. Anyway, we have had a long and pleasant association in this House, and I want to congratulate" him.

Then when we go on, Mr Speaker, if you ever read the speech, you would find out a little bit about the history of

the House, how much the members were paid way back in the 1950s. I think it was \$2,300 at that time and \$1,300 in expenses—just slightly under what we receive today.

The other part of it is that he was congratulated at that time by everyone. I would also say that in 1986, on his 28th anniversary, Premier Peterson said, "The member has the affection of each one of us. He has taught us all that partisanship must be kept in its place in this House and that it should never get in the way of friendship, congeniality and mutual respect."

I think those words really reflect the respect Ron McNeil had in this Legislature and indeed in his community. He lived a long life. After he left this place, I'm told he still participated very much in his community. A road in his community was named after Ron, which he considered very important.

I think Ron McNeil will go down in the history of the Legislature as one of those MPPs who never forgot where he came from, and during all that time he served everyone who came to him for help.

1400

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): Ron McNeil represented the riding for 29 years, seven months and 10 days. Like many members of this Legislature, he began his career on a municipal council, serving first on the municipal council of South Dorchester in 1946. He served as reeve of South Dorchester from 1949 to 1952, and in 1952 he was elected warden of Elgin county, the same year that Elgin county celebrated its 100th anniversary, and he served as one of the honorary chairmen.

He was first elected in a by-election in 1958, and it's very interesting to read some of Mr McNeil's comments from Hansard: "One of the reasons for holding the by-election on a Thursday—and at that time, the date of the by-election was set by the Premier, not by statute—was that Mr Frost—the Premier—"did not like to have a by-election or an election on a Monday, because it interfered with the housewives' washing. Wednesday was out because we had half holidays for the businessmen. That left Tuesday and Thursday. Friday was out because otherwise the weekend would be upset."

Mr McNeil went on to be re-elected eight times, serving as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Agriculture from 1977 to 1985. When he was defeated in the 1987 election, he returned to his farm in the village of Lyons. He said at that time, "I haven't retired, you know, I've just changed jobs."

During his career in this Legislature, he saw it grow from 90 seats to 130, and he served under five Premiers: four Conservative and one Liberal.

It was interesting to read Ron's maiden speech in this Legislature in 1958 and see the issues he brought to this Legislature 45 years ago—issues where he was very much a visionary and issues that still affect Elgin county today. He spoke about the tourism industry and the important role it played in the local economy. He recognized the need for good roads and that government "should continue to improve our highways and through financial assistance help municipalities build better

county and township roads.” He spoke about tobacco: “We are in a riding that is proud of our tobacco growers and the contribution they’ve made to the economy of this province.” He also made reference to the millions of dollars that the provincial and federal governments derived from tobacco revenue, and we know they continue to derive those dollars today.

He also recognized the diversity that existed in the agricultural industry and that the province needed to provide research and extension services to agriculture. “A healthy agriculture is the backbone of the economy of this province,” Mr McNeil said.

It’s interesting as well that in 1959 he highlighted another issue that is still very much present and affects those of us who represent ridings on the north shore of Lake Erie today, and that is erosion: “I appeal to this government for assistance in the control of this very serious problem. Each year acres of valuable farmland are slipping into the lake—land, of course, that is lost from agricultural production forever.” He advocated for that in 1959, and it’s an issue that I know Mr McNeil would still be advocating for today.

It was interesting as well that when he first arrived here in 1958, most of the members in this Legislature stayed at the Royal York Hotel, and the cost was \$5 a night. The salary at that time was \$2,600 a year, but you also received \$1,300 for expenses. But some things have changed. At that time there were no offices for members. Many of us have seen the little coat racks around the building that once served as offices for members. Members had no staff at the time. Ron recalled, in one of the tributes in the Legislature, that “Mr Frost said that every member was entitled to a desk, and that desk was right here. It was not anything unusual to come into the House in the morning and see various members of all political parties dictating to ... secretaries, who belonged to a pool. I do not recall ever having any filing system. I guess if a member had a filing system, he had to take it home, because there was no office space here for files.”

I got an opportunity to know Ron over the years. I would stop in and visit him or run into him at various functions in the county because, as the honourable member said earlier, he was very dedicated to people, and he continued to serve his community in various capacities over the years. He talked about some of the days before the advent of constituency offices, something that we all take for granted here, but constituency offices weren’t always here. Ron talked about the fact that you worked from your home or your car and you were expected to make house calls regularly, many things that we still do today, but again, you were responsible for that at your home.

In reading Hansard and speaking with individuals, he was described as one of the real grassroots Ontarians in this Legislature. Ron McNeil certainly served with honour, integrity, distinction and dignity. He recognized—and I think this is most important—the importance of representing the people of his riding and ensuring that their views were expressed, either here in

the Legislature or directly to ministers, and of treating each of his constituents equally and not judging anybody by any party colour.

One thing he spoke of was something that I’ve not experienced, unfortunately. There’s a bit of this camaraderie that exists, but I don’t think it exists like it used to. He talked about the assembly at the time and the non-partisan friendship and camaraderie that did exist in this building. You were partisan in the Legislature and you were partisan at a committee meeting, but when you walked out the door, you were friends and you spoke to one another. It was not uncommon that members of all political parties would spend time and have dinner together, or sit down and play some cards here in the building. That was very common.

I think his pride and joy, and probably one of his biggest legacies—and Ron left many legacies—was the establishment of the Ontario Police College in Aylmer in 1971. Ron was always proud of that facility, a facility we know continues to serve police services across this province.

Ron was not a tall man. But it was very common at functions for the emcee to ask, “Ron McNeil, please stand up and be recognized.” He would always come back with the line—and he used it in the Legislature—“But I am standing.”

Ron was predeceased by his wife, Doris, whom he married in 1985. He’s survived by his brother Alex, his sister Dora and numerous nieces and nephews.

He was always active in a wide variety of organizations. He had been awarded the Queen’s jubilee medal in 2002 and was inducted into the Elgin County Agricultural Hall of Fame in 2003. In a tribute, Larry Grossman told the Legislature at the time, “If Ontario and Canada ever had a Will Rogers of their own, I would want to nominate the member from Elgin as our own Will Rogers.”

Ron McNeil put people first. He was a tireless representative of all his constituents, and this is a trait that each one of us should bear in mind every day.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): New Democrats join others in this Legislature in paying tribute to Ronald Keith McNeil, and indeed mourning his loss and his passing. For almost 30 years he was here in this Legislature, from his first by-election in 1958 until 1987, and even before that, at the age of 26, being elected locally in 1946 in township politics in his own community, down there in the riding of Essex.

He has been described as self-deprecating, and indeed the reference by Grossman to him as a Will Rogers character is illustrated perhaps back in 1985, when after almost three decades of being part of government, albeit as a backbencher, he found himself in opposition ranks. An article by Nick Martin in the London Free Press from June 1985 quotes Ron McNeil as saying, “It’s not impossible to adjust. I’m just fortunate to be here after I’ve seen what happened to some of my colleagues in southwestern Ontario.” The article goes on, “McNeil, a career backbencher who has never sat in cabinet, said he

has placed questions to Conservative ministers during question period in his 27 years in the Legislature. 'But I can't recall right offhand what they were.'"

He was here certainly when the manner of doing business was far different than it has been in the recent past.

1410

Mr Peters made references to card games here in the building. I understand there were a few down at the Royal York Hotel, that indeed Queen's Park and the precinct was not the only venue for government business to be conducted. That in and of itself isn't a bad thing, because as I recall what so many veterans of that period have been able to tell me and my colleagues, there were ways of getting things done and achieving goals in a far more civil and collegial manner than what many of us have witnessed in the recent past.

Mr Peters made references to Mr McNeil's having to be here for almost 30 years before he saw and served with five Premiers. Heck, I was only here but seven years and I had already seen three Premiers. Times certainly have changed. Mr McNeil had to wait almost 30 years to see five, and by the time I had been here seven years—I've been here 15 now—I had seen three, and some suggest I may well see yet more before my parliamentary career is over.

Mr McNeil was undoubtedly held in the highest regard by his community, not only as a young man and then as the representative for his community, but also in his senior years. Undoubtedly, as press reports confirm, he kept touch with his community and his community kept in touch with him.

As it has been noted, he married late. He and his wife were married at a point in their lives when children were most unlikely, and indeed there weren't any. I say to the people of the riding of Elgin, to Mr McNeil's extended family, to his friends, his neighbours and his community, that they can be proud of having had amongst their friends and neighbours, and as their political representative, a person with the character, commitment and passion for public service that Mr McNeil had. New Democrats join others in this Legislature in extending our regrets to extended family, friends and his community and acknowledging his significant and profound contribution to politics here in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker: I thank all members for their kinds words and will ensure copies of Hansard are sent to family and friends.

PHILIP SHRIVE

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Minister of Public Safety and Security): I believe we have unanimous consent for all parties to say a few words on the passing of OPP Senior Constable Philip Shrive in the line of duty.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

Hon Mr Runciman: There are 215 names on the Ontario Police Memorial that's just a few steps from this

chamber. It is with the greatest of sadness that I rise in the House today to say that next year another name will be added to that growing list.

As many members of the House know, Senior Constable Philip Ray Shrive died last Friday of injuries he sustained in the line of duty. Premier Eves, official opposition leader Mr McGuinty and I attended the funeral in Renfrew yesterday and extended the condolences of the people of Ontario and this House to Constable Shrive's family.

Phil Shrive proudly served the Ontario Provincial Police and the people of the province proudly and well for 30 years. He was a family man who leaves behind a wife and four children. He was a dedicated officer who was respected by his peers and members of the community. He was committed to the welfare of his fellow officers, serving as a branch president of the Ontario Provincial Police Association. These are the simple facts of Constable Shrive's life. We are left to fill in the details of what those 30 years of service have meant to the communities where he served.

Phil Shrive wanted to be a police officer. He knew the challenges and sacrifices the job would demand. In 1973, he joined the OPP family as a civilian radio operator, helping officers on the front lines. In September 1974, Phil took a momentous step when he donned the uniform of the OPP, a uniform he would wear proudly for the next 29 years. It must have been a momentous day for everyone in the Shrive family as his older brother Paul presented him with his badge and warrant card.

This was the beginning of a career that would see Phil Shrive posted to a variety of detachments across the province, beginning in Sioux Lookout. As he was transferred to different detachments, Constable Shrive performed a variety of duties in the service of many communities. When he was in Downsview, he worked in motorcycle traffic enforcement. In Oak Ridges and Shelburne, he continued doing general patrol duties. In 1989, he went to South Porcupine, where he worked as an ident officer. In 1996, he transferred to the West Carleton detachment, where he worked as a community services officer in schools. He also had a stint as a media relations officer. As well, he found special joy in his time as a marine officer helping to keep Ontario's waterways safe.

Constable Shrive worked long and hard to make the communities where he served safer for everyone. He was on traffic duty with the Renfrew detachment on May 16 when he was in a collision while performing his duties. The injuries in that accident claimed his life last Friday.

Phil Shrive gave everything in the performance of his duties, but his contribution reached beyond the demands of the job. He served for 10 years, until his death, as a branch president of the Ontario Provincial Police Association, working diligently on behalf of his fellow officers.

I knew Phil through his association activities, and I can personally vouch for his willingness to put forward the best interests of his brother and sister OPP officers.

Perhaps "enthusiasm" is a better word when it came to letting me know his views. Phil was not a shy man.

His brother Paul, who is a retired OPP chief superintendent and currently the chief of police in Port Moody, BC, said, "His work with the OPPA was his proudest accomplishment. He was deeply concerned about the welfare of his fellow officers. I think that will be his legacy."

Constable Shrive was also a licensed fixed-wing pilot and an enthusiastic builder of radio control model aircraft.

He leaves behind his much-loved wife, Karen, and four children, Neil, Karen, Graham and Rebecca, and his mother and father. His family was by his side when he passed away.

As much as the communities Constable Shrive served and his fellow officers feel his loss, we can barely conceive of the void his family must feel at his passing.

I know everyone in this House joins me in extending our most sincere condolences and respect to everyone in the Shrive family.

Senior Constable Phil Shrive was the embodiment of the motto engraved on the Ontario Police Memorial. He was truly a hero in life, not death.

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): Having met and known Phil, it is with great sadness and respect that I rise today on behalf of Dalton McGuinty and the Liberal caucus to pay tribute to Senior Constable Phil Shrive.

Constable Shrive died on May 23, 2003, succumbing to injuries he suffered in a two-vehicle collision on Highway 17 on May 16, 2003, while in the line of duty. A member of the Ontario Provincial Police family since 1972-73, Constable Shrive also served as branch president in the Ontario Provincial Police Association from 1993 to 2003. This tells us a story of leadership, dedication and compassion for his fellow officers, not to mention the personal sacrifice one makes in leadership.

As a police officer, Constable Shrive gave the ultimate sacrifice in service to the province of Ontario, and in particular to his community of Renfrew. My colleague and friend Sean Conway, the member representing this area, along with the Premier, Minister Runciman and my leader, Dalton McGuinty, and others, attended the funeral services for Constable Shrive.

Ladies and gentlemen, the presence and acknowledgements from members of all three parties were an act of goodwill and respect, and all of us in this House thank you for representing the Legislature, as I am sure it was appreciated by the Shrive family and his colleagues. We all offer our personal heartfelt sympathies to the family and friends of constable Shrive. A dutiful son, a good brother and a loving husband, Constable Shrive leaves his grieving wife Karen and four children, Neil, Karen, Graham and Rebecca. To the Shrive family, relatives and friends, we offer our deepest sympathies and prayers as you continue your journey in life.

1420

Today, as we honour and celebrate the triumph of the special life of Constable Phil Shrive, let us be reminded

of the special and important job all our public safety personnel do for us day in and day out. I offer words of reflection for all of us:

Take time to think—thoughts are the source of power.

Take time to play—play is the secret of perpetual youth.

Take time to read—reading is the fountain of wisdom.

Take time to pray—prayer can be a rock of strength in a time of trouble.

Take time to love—loving is what makes living worthwhile.

Take time to be friendly—friendships give life a precious flavour.

Take time to laugh—laughter is the music of the soul.

Take time to give—any day of the year is too short for selfishness.

Take time to do your work well—pride in your work, no matter what it is, nourishes the ego and the spirit.

Finally, take time to appreciate—thanks is the frosting on the cake of life.

Speaker, he and others are heroes in life, not in death.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Howard Hampton and every member of this NDP caucus express our sincere condolences to Phil Shrive's wife Karen and to his four children, as well as to Phil Shrive's colleagues in the detachment in which he most recently served and colleagues in detachments in which he served across this province, from Downsview to South Porcupine, in a variety of roles, and as well to members of those communities whose lives were undoubtedly touched by Senior Constable Phil Shrive in the course of his performance of those duties. He will truly be missed by oh so many.

He truly was not just a talented police officer but a multi-talented police officer. The diversity of positions he held and the incredible range of skills he acquired and perfected in performing those diverse roles speak of an incredibly competent and also committed police officer. In the motorcycle detachment out of Downsview—and I put to you that those of us who know police officers who are in the motorcycle detachments know they have a passion for their motorcycles. In Senior Constable Shrive's case, it was compounded by his passion for flying, because people don't fly without a passion for flying, and people don't ride motorcycles without a passion for motorcycles.

He clearly had a passion for his job and for his fellow police officers. Not only was he an association activist, but he took on the responsibilities of leadership in the OPPA. So he served his community—those Ontarians who were the beneficiaries of his OPP service—but he also served his fellow officers. He undoubtedly wanted to make the province a better and safer place for all Ontarians, and he undoubtedly wanted to make policing a better and safer place for all police officers.

So we join in the tribute being paid to him today. We acknowledge the risk that police officers and other emergency personnel undertake every time they embark on their jobs. The tragedy of an active-duty police officer

having to give his life in the course of performing his job is difficult to parallel. There will be a tribute to him, of course, in the monument here at Queen's Park, but more importantly, the legacy he has left behind in terms of his service to his communities, his service to his province, his service to his colleagues, his fellow police officers, will survive decades and generations. New Democrats hope that the regard with which Senior Constable Phil Shrive is held, not only in this Legislature but in communities across this province, will provide some modest comfort to his children, his wife, his family, his friends, his neighbours and his fellow police officers.

The Speaker: I'd like to thank members for their kind comments, and I will ensure that they get sent to the family as well.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: We were informed that the Premier would be in attendance at question period.

The Speaker: As you know, the Speaker can't do anything about that. He may be in the back and coming. We don't seem to be able to rag the puck in this instance.

ORAL QUESTIONS

EDUCATION LABOUR DISPUTE

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question, then, is to the Minister of Education. Now that the Premier has decided not to call an election, we're wondering if, over there on that side of the House, you're going to stop playing political games with the 69,000 Toronto schoolchildren who are not able to attend their classes. We believe that those kids belong in the classroom, and we've introduced a bill that would accomplish just that.

I know that you wanted to feed this crisis because you believed it would help your political fortunes. But the election is off, and we're wondering if you might at the same time call off the political gamesmanship. Why not support our bill to get kids back to school as soon as possible?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Deputy Premier, Minister of Education): The Leader of the Opposition talks about political gamesmanship. The leader and his party have had the opportunity since we introduced the back-to-school legislation last week to ensure that the students could go back into the classroom. If he really believes in putting students first, he and his party should support our bill and get the kids back into the classroom. What is it that you have against putting our students first?

Mr McGuinty: Why can't we be honest about this? It takes a lot of work to get all three parties to agree on any kind of legislation in this House, but you have to be especially careful if you want to introduce back-to-work legislation. It has to be clean, it has to be honest and it has to be straightforward. It can't have anything that is controversial inside of it.

That's what we've introduced. We've introduced a clean, straightforward, honest bill. You've been playing games. You've introduced an element that you know only too well would be controversial. It seems to me that if you genuinely wanted to get those kids back to the classroom, you would support our bill because it's a genuine effort to ensure that we put forward something that's based on the kinds of models that have been used by all three parties in the past. It's clean, it's honest, it's straightforward and it accomplishes nothing more than getting kids back in the classroom. Why won't you support our bill?

Hon Mrs Witmer: Does the Leader of the Opposition not agree that allowing teachers to complete report cards, particularly at this time of the year, is something that teachers should be doing? Does he not agree that they should be administering EQAO tests? Does he not support, particularly at the end of the school year, meetings between teachers, parents and students? Does he not support teachers being involved in co-op placements? Does he not agree that there should be an opportunity for teachers and students to participate in graduation ceremonies?

This member doesn't put students first. He's putting political opportunism first.

1430

Mr McGuinty: Madam Minister, you may not be able to distinguish between a campaign promise that you want to run on and the urgent matter before us, which is to get 69,000 kids back in their classrooms. That's what we're trying to do here today. That's all we're trying to do, just get 69,000 kids back in the classroom, and that's all that our bill does—nothing less and nothing more. It is purposely and deliberately clean, honest and straightforward.

I want to raise something else with you, Madam Minister. In addition to our concern about 69,000 kids in the Catholic board being locked out of the classroom, there is a very real fear now that something untoward is going to happen at Toronto's public board. Your own supervisor has now said that he has a deadline for ending negotiations for this Sunday. He's not just playing hardball with teachers; he's playing hardball with students.

I think this is getting out of hand, and I have a question for you on behalf of the parents of those 200,000 kids going to the public board at the elementary level. Will you guarantee parents and students that the Toronto public board, now under your control, will not proceed with a lockout?

Hon Mrs Witmer: The member opposite knows full well that this government has worked hard this past year in order to create a stable environment for teachers and for students. We have invested \$680 million to ensure that settlements can be arrived at, and it is our hope that today the Leader of the Opposition would encourage his members to pass our bill in order that we can avoid strikes and lockouts and work-to-rule, and put our students first.

NURSES

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): I didn't get an answer on that one, Speaker. I'll try another minister now, the Minister of Health.

Minister, SARS, as you well know, continues to devastate us. Front-line workers, as you know, are doing their very best, but your failure to hire full-time nurses is making things worse. There are at least 12,000 registered nurses in Ontario working at two or more jobs in two or more health care settings. That means that nurses can and are in fact becoming suspected carriers of SARS from one health care setting to another.

You may be aware that there was a nurse at North York General who is suspected to have contracted SARS there. She also happens to work at the Toronto Rehab. Not only is the North York General now closed but the Toronto Rehab, as a result of this nurse working in both locations, has now closed two wings and quarantined a total of five nurses at home.

Since the outbreak, you have done absolutely nothing to hire more full-time nurses in Ontario. Why not, Minister?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I want to assure the honourable member and members of this Legislature that it is a top priority of this government to hire more nurses—full-time nurses, part-time nurses, nurses who want to make that choice. The fact is that in the last five years there have been 12,833 new nursing positions as a result of a direct infusion of \$800 million by the provincial government, and 8,555 of those are full-time positions. Indeed, there are more full-time nursing positions in Ontario than at any time since statistics have been kept, at least in the last 18 years, and they are the highest-paid nurses in the Dominion of Canada.

Of course, there is more to do, and I certainly indicate to the honourable member that that's why we want to graduate 8,000 new nurses over the next three years. That's why we'll pay the tuition for those who want to work in underserved areas. That is our plan for more nurses in Ontario.

Mr McGuinty: Here's the truth on this score, Minister. First of all, you've done absolutely nothing to hire more full-time nurses since the first outbreak of SARS. Second, we have the second-fewest nurses per capita in comparison to all the other provinces right across the country.

We now learn that instead of hiring full-time nurses in our public hospitals, you're bringing in part-time, private emergency nurses at a cost two to three times what it would take to hire a full-time nurse, fully employed inside the public health care system. We learned last night that North York General Hospital brought in 10 nurses from the private firm Med-Emerg, at a cost of between \$70 and \$100 an hour. That money could and should have been spent to hire full-time nurses.

Minister, I ask again: why are you not hiring full-time nurses in Ontario, especially since the first outbreak of SARS?

Hon Mr Clement: I don't think we should make apologies for ensuring that as a result of quarantine and sickness we have the right nurses, doctors and other medical practitioners to deal with SARS cases or with the other 99% of what occurs in our health care system. That, I think, is prudent and wise to do. It's the right thing to do from a clinical perspective and from a public policy perspective.

If the honourable member was interested in solving this problem, his point should be that we need long-term strategies. That's why we are graduating 8,000 nurses from our post-secondary system, that's why we're ensuring they have free tuition if they want to practise in underserved areas, that's why we're the first province in Canada to invest substantially in nurse practitioners—all part of our comprehensive, long-term nursing strategy—and that's why those strategies are going to work.

I would say to any prospective nurse in Ontario, throughout Canada or anywhere in the world, "You are welcome in Ontario. We have an excellent health care system. We have the highest remuneration"—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The minister's time is up.

Mr McGuinty: Minister, you've had eight long years to develop a long-term strategy. We're not in the position today where we can capably cope with these kinds of medical emergencies. Your strategy with respect to nurses has been to fire them by the thousands. You cost Ontario taxpayers \$400 million in severance costs to fire nurses. Nurses by the thousands now working outside Ontario said they would love to come back to our province. Seventy per cent said they would come back to our province on condition that they had full-time work. They're not here. We don't have enough here because you're not giving them full-time work.

I ask you again, Minister: why is it that after eight years we find ourselves in a position where we can barely cope with these medical emergencies? Why have we ended up with the second-fewest nurses per capita in the country? Why are we hiring private, part-time nurses at a cost of \$70 to \$100 an hour? Why have you failed to ensure that we have enough full-time nurses on the job in Ontario to help us manage SARS?

Hon Mr Clement: I can only tell you—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Thank you.

Sorry, Minister.

Hon Mr Clement: I think the honourable member should have a reality check on his own party's record when they were in government. In Hansard, it was indicated on May 16, 1990, that 80 placements were cut down to 35 placements "as a direct result of Liberal policies for funding."

The Toronto Star headline for May 9, 1989: "30-year Nurse Blames Dad's Death on Nursing Shortages at Hospital."

The Windsor Star, January 25, 1989: "Most nurses are disillusioned. They want more money, more respect and more say in decision-making."

Those were the headlines in the province of Ontario under a Liberal government. We can't afford a Liberal government for reasons of taxes, we can't afford a Liberal government with respect to reckless spending and we certainly can't afford a Liberal government because of their prior attitude and their record when it comes to supporting the nursing profession in Ontario. We need a government that cares, and we care.

SARS

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is to the Minister of Health. In reference to SARS, you now talk about a "new normal," but it looks like the same old thing. On May 20, nurses at two hospitals raised concerns about possible SARS cases. They worried about their safety and urged precautions. That was two days before you closed St John's and three days before a quarantine order.

We now have experts saying your government let the guard against SARS down too early. They say you've been playing with semantics and classifications about what constitutes a SARS case when you should have been putting the safety of our health care workers and our patients first.

Minister, why did it take three days to put in place a quarantine order after nurses told you they suspected SARS?

1440

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I will answer factually, despite the fact that the question was not factual.

The simple answer is that as soon as the public health branch of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and I, as the minister, learned of this, we swung into action. That occurred Thursday afternoon and Thursday evening. We had a press conference to let the world know what was going on by Thursday evening. So the answer to your question is, as soon as we learned of a situation that we were not aware of before, we acted.

Mr Hampton: One would think that with such a very serious disease, it shouldn't take three days to put in place a quarantine. These are the very hospital workers who worked themselves virtually to exhaustion in the first place.

We found out something else that is disturbing. We're told now that it's all hands on deck, that screening is to be put in place, but at the very time this is supposedly happening, hospital workers at Humber River Regional Hospital, Finch and Church Street sites, were told today they are being laid off. Minister, if it's all hands on deck, if this is truly a case of making sure that this is contained, does it make any sense that hospital workers who are on

the front line are being told they are now going to take layoffs?

Hon Mr Clement: Forgive me if I don't take your word on it, but I will look into the matter, of course. The short answer to your question is, of course not. We want our health care system to function properly. We want it to function with the most available personnel. So assuming there is a scintilla or a granule of truth in what you said, I'll certainly look into it.

Mr Hampton: I'll make it easy for you. The head of the hospital is Dr Reuben Devlin, who is the president of the Ontario Conservative Party. What is even more alarming is that—

Interjection: No, he's not.

Mr Hampton: Well, the former president, then.

What is even more alarming is that the very hospital workers who are being laid off in this situation constitute 50% of the outpatient care at Humber River. These are the very people who conduct the screening at the hospital. They are the very people who, when someone comes into the hospital, take the temperature. They do the SARS screening.

Minister, you didn't listen to those nurses, or you didn't listen very quickly to those nurses, who on May 20 said they suspected new SARS cases. Why are you now laying off the very hospital workers at Humber River who just this morning would have been conducting the SARS screening at that hospital when people came into work?

Hon Mr Clement: I take exception to your accusation that we did not act quickly. That is false. That is without merit. It is, quite frankly, beneath you, sir, to make that accusation. And don't make faces at me, because this is a serious chamber. If the honourable member has some evidence or information that is real, I suggest he share it with me. I'd be happy to look into it. And if the honourable member has any information about Humber River Regional that I should know about, certainly I will look into that, but forgive me, given the nature of your question and the nature of your torquing of the question, if I don't take your word for it.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a question to the Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services. Yesterday, Judge Lane dismissed your government's attempt to appeal the ruling by Justice Gans which forces your government to pay for IBI treatment for six-year-old Andrew Lowrey. In his decision, Judge Lane said, "This case is about one six-year-old boy who will suffer irreparable harm if he does not receive this treatment." Hundreds of other autistic children like Andrew also face irreparable harm because your government cuts them off from IBI treatment when they turn age six, because they languish on a waiting list and never receive treatment at all, or because their parents face financial ruin as they try to pay for this costly treatment themselves.

Minister, when is your government going to do the right thing and fund IBI treatment for all autistic children who need it?

Hon Brenda Elliott (Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services): On this side, we are aware of the decision that was made yesterday. What that means is our commitment to helping those children and families who struggle with autism remains very strong. I say to the person in the third party across the way, who criticizes us on a regular basis for our autism programs, that under her government not one cent was ever given to autism. Under our government in 1999, we started a program that has now grown to \$100 million, which responds to the research that says very intensive therapy to those children at the very critical early years is the right way to go. That is the expert advice we are following. We are supplementing that with a number of new programs, all aimed in one direction, and that is to help the children and the families who are struggling with autism.

Ms Martel: May I remind you, Minister, with respect to your commitment, that it was your government that was in court trying to appeal a ruling forcing you to pay for treatment for Andrew. That's the level of your commitment to these kids. May I also remind you that right now we have 29 Ontario families taking your government to court because you have arbitrarily cut off treatment for their children at age six; we have another 80 families who have filed complaints before the Ontario Human Rights Commission, arguing your government discriminates against their children on the basis of age; we have the Ombudsman, who is doing a special investigation because of the waiting lists for IBI treatments; and yesterday, Justice Lane dismissed your government's blatant attempt to try and undermine a court ruling that said Andrew's treatment should be paid for? I ask you again, Minister, when is your government going to do the right thing and pay for IBI treatment for every autistic child who needs it?

Hon Mrs Elliott: Our government understands that autism is a disorder of which the incidence appears to be growing. Researchers all around the world are trying to find a solution to help the children and families who are struggling with this disorder. That is why it is our government that has instituted not only the intensive behavioural intervention-type program that responds to the research that says it is the most effective provided at an early age, but we are moving forward with new programs, transition programs from those early year programs into school age and, for the first time in the history of Ontario, introducing out-of-school programs for children with autism who are of school age, in addition to the special education programs already offered in the province of Ontario. Why? Because we know that helping children is the right thing to do. That is why this government has \$2.2 billion invested in programs for children.

PUBLIC HEALTH

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition):

My question is to the Minister of Health. Minister, it was just about a month ago that the Premier announced "next steps," as he called them. I'm looking at your news release here on the SARS recovery strategy. Included among the specific commitments, it says here, "The province will assist municipalities to cover SARS-related staffing.... A priority is to reinforce the public health care system to continue the battle against SARS. The government will immediately expand staffing in public health."

That was back on April 29, nearly a month ago. Can you tell us how much money has now flowed to public health units across the province, but especially here in Toronto, which is struggling with the throes of another outbreak of SARS?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I can tell you that I had a conversation with Mayor Lastman about this just late last week, and indicated to him that we were very mindful of the Premier's commitment, which was a commitment as a leader in the fight against SARS—which the Premier is, incidentally.

The fact of the matter is that that is still our commitment as a government. It still is, in fact, our intention, and there will be more details in the very near future. The fact of the matter is, as well, that we have an outstanding commitment from the federal Liberal government with respect to the same issue, and I would encourage the member—I've sent several letters to the Minister of Health Canada; my colleague the Honourable David Young has sent several letters to the Honourable Minister McCallum. If he wants to add his name to those letters, perhaps we can get them to move, because they haven't moved to date.

1450

Mr McGuinty: Can you ever deal with a health care issue, especially a health care emergency, and not point the finger of blame at the federal government? Can you ever provide real leadership? I want to remind you, this is your government's press release that was put out on April 29. You said you were going to "assist municipalities to cover SARS-related staffing." You said a priority is to reinforce the public health care system to continue the battle against SARS: "The government will immediately expand staffing in public health." Well, today we spoke to Joe Mihevc. You will know that he's the chair of the Toronto Board of Health. They say that you haven't sent a single penny to cover the costs of SARS, not since this announcement was made just over a month ago. You have broken your promise. I ask you again, why is it that you are great when it comes to putting out press releases, but you have yet to move forward and make sure that you actually send money to those people who need it to cope with SARS?

Hon Mr Clement: I'm sorry the honourable member feels that way. I think he might not feel that way at the

end of the day. I can definitely assure you that I had a very fruitful conversation with the mayor of the city of Toronto, who did understand that our commitment was still a commitment that we are going to keep. He was much more concerned about the lack of follow-through by the federal government of their commitments, their lack of understanding about Toronto and their lack of concern about Ontario and Toronto issues. That is the more important issue. If you want to be of help to the people of Ontario, you will help us to make sure that Jean Chrétien keeps his word.

RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre): I have a question for the Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, responsible for Rural Affairs. You lead our government's rural programs, which help meet the economic and infrastructure needs of the good people who call rural Ontario home. They're designed that way. Many Ontario communities can attest to the effectiveness of your ministry's business retention and expansion program, the resource jump teams program, and OSTAR infrastructure programs. Through these programs, your ministry has improved the quality of life for tens of thousands of rural families all across Ontario.

Recently you visited Kitchener-Waterloo to make an OSTAR rural economic development program announcement. I didn't know you were coming. Can you tell my constituents and the members of this House a little bit more about the OSTAR RED program?

Hon Ernie Hardeman (Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I want to thank the member for Kitchener Centre for his question and to commend him for his excellent work on behalf of his constituents. I know the member is aware that my priority and the stated priority of the Ernie Eves government is to ensure that rural and small-town Ontario communities remain viable, healthy and vibrant places in which to live, work and invest.

The OSTAR RED program stimulates economic growth in Ontario. It's part of the Ernie Eves government's commitment to breaking down economic barriers and creating new opportunities for existing rural businesses. To date, we have invested more than \$74 million in 82 approved OSTAR RED projects. These investments have already generated more than \$427 million in new economic activity in rural Ontario. This translates into more jobs for rural Ontario and a diversified, healthier business climate in which to explore new products and new markets.

Mr Wettlaufer: It's good to hear that our programs are working, stimulating economic growth and creating jobs in small-town and rural Ontario. I congratulate you for your excellent work, but with respect to your recent trip to Kitchener-Waterloo, I wonder if you can provide us with some highlights on the OSTAR RED investment and how it's going to benefit my riding.

Hon Mr Hardeman: I want to assure the member that it was a great pleasure to be in the Kitchener-Waterloo area. In fact I was in the riding just north of the honourable member's. It was a very pleasant visit. On that visit we made an announcement that we've invested \$314,183 to support the development and growth of the artisan bakery industry in Ontario through Project M.O.R.E. B.R.E.A.D. This funding, together with equal private sector investment from the project partners, the Artisan Bakers' Quality Alliance, is creating a partnership between five independently owned artisan bakeries across Ontario. This project addresses removing economic barriers to small artisan bakeries to grow sales, including purchasing state-of-the-art bread packaging equipment, expanding existing markets and gaining access to new ones. It's an expensive process, but the project partners are on target, not just to preserve artisan bread-making as a craft in Ontario, but also to grow the brand, achieving \$10 million in annual sales under the ABQA brand designation by 2004 and \$50 million by 2008. This is exciting news for—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I thank the minister. I'm afraid his time is up.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): My question is for the Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services. Last night when I asked you to clarify why you are withholding rights information for children in care, you said this issue is not so important. There were no questionable deaths of children in care for 20 years. Now, on your watch, seven children have died. Maybe that's not important to you, but it is important to me.

The office of the child advocate told me that rights information for children in care had not been provided because it has not been available for three years.

Matthew Geigen-Miller heard your irresponsible statement last night, and this was his reaction: "The issue of meaningful access to rights and advocacy is very important. It is literally a life-and-death issue for some children in care."

Minister, why are these kids in care not important to you?

Hon Brenda Elliott (Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services): I find the tone and the content of that question quite frankly offensive.

I was asked to speak last night in the House with regard to a question that was asked of me in the House a couple of days ago. As I said in my remarks last night, I thought the questioner was going into a more substantive issue. It ended up being a question about brochures and policies.

I have my notes, and I'll read those out. I indicated last night, and I assured the member opposite, that residential services do have posters and brochures, and I indicated we're working on new ones. And this is most important, I think, to what the question is about today:

for a children's residential service to receive their licence, there are rules for them to follow regarding notification of children's rights. When a child enters a residential facility, one of the things they must do is notify the child of his or her rights. They have to document that, and if they do not, their licence can be revoked.

I am offended that someone across the way—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The minister's time is up.

Mrs Dombrowsky: Well, Minister, you should do your homework. If you did, you would know that it's the very licensing agents who have been calling the children's advocate and asking that that information be placed in the homes. They're not revoking licences, because they've been told that information is not available. For three years they've been told this. The Jobin inquest identified this.

Minister, when your government can spend millions of dollars on partisan advertising, why is it that essential rights information is not available for these children? This isn't a frill. It isn't a luxury. It's for children in care, and it is their right to have it.

Minister, kids in care are important, and I ask you, I implore you, to act today to provide this rights information, provide them with a Web site and make sure they get what they deserve.

Hon Mrs Elliott: When I get up to go to work in the morning, the first thing I think about is what I need to do to make the world of children better in the province of Ontario. I'm offended by this kind of talk. I'm offended by someone who stands in the House and says that I prevented someone from making an annual report, when there's no requirement for an annual report. There has never been an annual report.

1500

If information was incorrect on a poster, then obviously we would be concerned and would be moving very quickly to change it. But I pointed out last night what is wrong on the poster. It is true that the office hours of the child advocate have been extended by 15 minutes, and it is true that there has been a change in the name of my ministry. All the other information on these posters is absolutely accurate. It is available. We are making changes to make new ones because that has been requested, and we are responding. But to suggest for one moment that I or anybody in my ministry doesn't work extremely hard, diligently and passionately to care about the kids in this province troubles me greatly, that you would even countenance those words in this House.

Interjections.

SARS

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): I can't understand that group there. This happens to be a fairly important question that I appreciate the opposition doesn't want to listen to. It's to the Minister of Health.

I understand that the leader of the third party asked a question regarding layoffs of front-line health care workers at Humber River Regional Hospital. Can you give us an update on what you understand the situation to be?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I thank the honourable member for the question. There were some details of which perhaps the leader of the third party was unaware. In fact, there are fewer than 10 health care workers affected by a recent decision to lower the number of people working in the chiropody foot care unit of the hospital. I can inform this House that they never did any SARS work whatsoever in the foot care unit, nor will it affect the hospital's SARS screening. So it looks like the honourable leader of the third party has managed to combine feet and his mouth in his question.

Mr Stewart: It kind of amazes me that every time we talk about health care issues, the opposition starts to heckle. I guess they don't have much faith in or don't really want to know much about health care in this province.

Minister, would you please update us on any new initiatives or programs that have been put in place in the last few days to address the SARS crisis?

Hon Mr Clement: In all seriousness, there was an important announcement made yesterday about an interim alliance among four Toronto-area hospitals—the William Osler Health Centre, Etobicoke campus; the General site of the Scarborough Hospital; the North York General Hospital; and St Mike's Hospital as a tertiary unit—all working together to have a comprehensive, integrated and coordinated approach when it comes to administering care to any SARS patients.

This is unprecedented in the hospital system. It came about as a result of the voluntary efforts of the hospitals in question. We believe that, having learned something from the first go-round with SARS, this will better assist us in dealing with SARS patients and making sure they get better quicker, and at the same time ensure that the other 99% of health care that occurs in our hospital system is done efficiently and safely for patients and health care workers combined.

This is an important step in our ongoing battle against SARS. It does not mean that we can let down our guard, but it's a step—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The minister's time is up.

ONTARIO DISABILITY SUPPORT PROGRAM

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): My question is for the Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services. There are 269,000 people in this province who rely on ODSP to survive. They haven't had an increase in their payments in 10 years, while the cost of living has gone up nearly 20%. You're forcing people with disabilities to live in poverty.

Thousands of others are even worse off because your red tape makes it too hard for them to even apply. You and the Liberals are content with a feeble promise to provide a one-time increase to their rates. What people with disabilities really need is dignity and a stable income that provides an annual cost of living increase. Will you commit today to adopting the NDP Public Power proposal of linking ODSP payments to the cost of living?

Hon Brenda Elliott (Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services): I find it interesting that a person from the third party would question me about ODSP rates, completely forgetting that when they were in power, they put this province into something like \$42 billion worth of additional debt in five short years, completely forgetting that all of the money that causes in interest payments is now spent on interest payments and could have gone to programs like disability or for children's programs.

They talk a compassionate talk but when it actually came to acting, they were certainly not compassionate in their actions, not for those who are presently receiving services, or even when you look at the policies of the day. This is a member of a government who left the disabled on the welfare system to languish. Their benefits had to be renewed every year. It is our government that said it's time to do something meaningful for the disabled in the province. So we took them out of the welfare system and, for the first time in the province of Ontario, created an Ontario disability support plan.

Mr Martin: This minister either doesn't understand the question, doesn't have an answer for the question or doesn't want to understand the question. However, she's also the minister who slept through Walkerton, if you remember.

Yesterday, my colleague Peter Kormos had the Burke family in to Queen's Park. For 10 years, they have had no increase in support payments to care for their severely disabled daughter. Like people on ODSP, those caring for disabled children deserve supports that meet their needs. Unfortunately, you and the Liberals continue to ignore these calls for justice and offer a feeble one-time increase.

Minister, I've made your job even easier by introducing yesterday my Fairness in Disability Income Support Payments Act. Will you pass my bill today and index ODSP payments to the cost of living?

Hon Mrs Elliott: Again, I return to my comments that we are the first government to take those who are disabled off of welfare, putting them in a program—

Interjection: Blah, blah, blah.

Hon Mrs Elliott: My colleague across the way says, "Blah, blah, blah." Did you know that those who are disabled think that the changes are very important? They're no longer considered permanently unemployable. We've changed that program so there are special benefits, new asset limits, all sorts of things that the disabled community found very effective and helpful.

Then it was our government that introduced the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, the first time in the

history of Canada we've had an act just for those who are disabled. Then we decided that there's more to do. That's why we have a plan. Our plan, "The Road Ahead," says, and in the throne speech we noted that we understand that people with disabilities have special needs that make it difficult for them to work. That's why we will increase the Ontario disability support program payments to help people with disabilities lead happier, more productive and dignified lives. That is why—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The minister's time is up.

GOVERNMENT ASSETS

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): My question is to the Minister of Finance. The fiscal plans this year depend on you selling \$2.2 billion worth of provincial assets. Just so the public realizes it, normally the number might be \$300 million a year, but it's \$2.2 billion. Without it, your numbers show you will run a very significant deficit. You're making campaign promises that are going to be paid for by selling \$2.2 billion of Ontario assets. It is like selling the family home to buy groceries. Ontarians deserve to know which of their assets you are planning to sell to meet your campaign promises. Will you today tell the people of Ontario which of their assets you are selling to raise the \$2.2 billion?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Finance): The honourable member should well know that every year we put together a budget that includes revenue forecasts and expenditure forecasts. We build flexibility into it because we know that through the year there are likely to be changes. Every year the goal is to be a balanced budget, and we have done that five years in a row, plus paid down \$5 billion in debt.

You want to look at the Liberal record? They increased the debt by 33%. That's not a very sound fiscal management record whatsoever.

1510

Mr Phillips: Let me again be extremely specific and direct to you. It's \$2.2 billion of major assets that you're selling. Ontarians have a right. This isn't some private little Ernie Eves company; this is the province of Ontario. You are selling their assets; not Ernie Eves's assets—their assets. And \$2.2 billion is an incredible amount of money; we will have a significant deficit without it. They have a right to know the answer to this, Minister. You can't hide behind this. This isn't some private little company on Bay Street; this is the public's money. Tell us today, now, what is the \$2.2 billion worth of assets you're selling? Tell the people of Ontario today. They are entitled to know the answer to that question.

Hon Mrs Ecker: Every year—again, we are very open about this—we review the public assets that we manage on behalf of taxpayers. When there are changes required, we make those changes. For example, last year we divested ourselves of the provincial savings office, at significant benefit to the consumers, the employees and

the communities where those banks reside. There was an example of where we looked at it, we reviewed it. It made better sense for taxpayers and consumers to divest ourselves of that bank. We will continue to review all public assets, as required, if required. If changes are needed, we'll make them.

The honourable member likes to stand up there and talk about their fiscal record. Not only did they increase the debt by 33%, not only did they increase taxes 33 times, but the same advisers who told David Peterson to increase your debt, to increase your taxes, are those same advisers whom Dalton McGuinty is now relying upon for his new economic agenda.

SMART GROWTH

Mr AL McDonald (Nipissing): My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Minister, you were in North Bay yesterday to receive the final report of the Smart Growth committee for northeastern Ontario. Unfortunately—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): We'll put the clock back and you can start over. I apologize. The member for Nipissing has the floor, please. Sorry, member. You may start over.

Mr McDonald: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Minister, you were in North Bay yesterday to receive the final report of the Smart Growth committee for northeastern Ontario. Unfortunately, I wasn't able to be there with you due to my commitments here at Queen's Park, but I did hear from several of my constituents that you were well received and that you have a good understanding of the issues and concerns we face in the north.

Minister, in the report local, municipal, business and community leaders shared with you their advice on how to make sure that our part of the province can enjoy the many opportunities for growth while protecting—

Interjections.

The Speaker: The member for Windsor-St Clair, this is his last warning, and to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. I'm not going to have you arguing back and forth. If you want to talk about it, go outside. The member for Nipissing has the floor. He's asking an important question. If you want to continue the conversation and argue, go outside.

The member for Nipissing has the floor. Sorry to interrupt again.

Mr McDonald: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

In the report, Minister, local, municipal, business and community leaders shared with you their advice on how to make sure our part of the province enjoys many opportunities for growth while protecting the environment and the quality of life that we cherish. I'm hoping that the minister can share with this House some of the advice in the report and also his thoughts on what the next steps should be.

Hon David Young (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I thank the honourable member for his question and for his support over the last number of months. He indeed is a great advocate for his community. His insight and understanding of some of the challenges that North Bay and the area around North Bay face are of great assistance to me and to other members of the government.

Yesterday I had an opportunity to travel to North Bay, and I received the northeastern panel's report; that's the Smart Growth report. You will remember of course that there are five different panels that exist. This government decided that five panels were necessary in order to reflect the diverseness and richness of this province. There are different challenges in different parts of the province. Clearly in southern Ontario, an area that has had exponential growth over the last short while, we are going to have to do different things to accommodate and encourage orderly growth.

For other regions of the province, like the area that my friend hails from, there are different challenges. We must find a way of ensuring that young people will be able to stay in the communities they grew up in, that there will be opportunities there and that the services will be there when and where they need them.

Mr McDonald: I agree with you that we cannot apply the same solutions to northern Ontario as we do to the issues in southern Ontario. Our challenges and priorities are very different, as you know, and that's why it's so important that Smart Growth panels rely on advice of local leaders.

Minister, I know that both you and Premier Eves have demonstrated your commitment to moving forward with Smart Growth principles, economic growth, better transportation and a clean and healthy environment. This government has taken the important steps when it comes to supporting economic development and improved medical services in northern Ontario. Minister, how will this report help build upon this government's vision for a stronger and more prosperous northern Ontario?

Hon Mr Young: Premier Eves has already begun what is a very important task. You will undoubtedly be aware that the Premier has announced both capital funding and operating funds for the first northern Ontario medical school. That's something that is very important to the honourable member who posed the question and very important for the people of northern Ontario.

When I was in North Bay yesterday I also heard a great deal of talk about the first and largest tax incentive zone announcement, and of course that is an announcement that Premier Eves made in relation to all of northern Ontario. The results of that have already materialized. We have seen companies from across Canada and from the United States inquiring of northern mayors and business leaders about the prospect of moving to northern Ontario.

Before I sit down, I do want to mention the fact that Premier Eves has announced \$370 million to expand Highway 11 and Highway 69. The report we got yester-

day will assist us to provide even more resources and opportunities in northern Ontario.

EDUCATION FUNDING

FINANCEMENT DE L'ÉDUCATION

M^{me} Claudette Boyer (Ottawa-Vanier): My question is to the Minister of Education. Madame la ministre, votre gouvernement, dans son discours du trône, a bien dit que tous les enfants de l'Ontario méritaient une éducation de qualité et des chances de succès égales, indépendamment de leur situation économique, de leur lieu de résidence, de leur origine ethnique ou de leur croyance religieuse.

This government prides itself on having taken seriously many recommendations of Dr Rozanski's report. Nevertheless, your government has done nothing to follow up recommendation 14 of the Rozanski report, urging your government to revise the funding formula so as to seriously look into the particular needs of the francophone schools in the province, although the report did recognize that the funding for francophone schools was inadequate.

Madam Minister, when will you address this issue and give Franco-Ontarian schools the financial resources they need so that they may respect the requirements of the different curricula and offer Franco-Ontarian students the full range of courses and services they are entitled to?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Deputy Premier, Minister of Education): I appreciate the question regarding the funding for our French schools in Ontario. I would just begin by saying to the member opposite that I've had the opportunity to visit some of the French schools throughout Ontario and I've been extremely impressed by the quality of education, the enthusiasm of the students and the hard work of the teachers, administrators and trustees.

In response to your question regarding funding: you may or may not know that immediately after Dr Rozanski issued his report, made his recommendations, we set up a team of stakeholders from the French-language community in order to address the unique needs and the additional costs which we would agree are there. I would just let you know that they are in the process now of determining how they can best follow through on Dr Rozanski's recommendation.

1520

Mrs Boyer: Madam Minister, I understand what you are saying. The francophone community was waiting for something in the throne speech. We all know you really think that the per pupil funding principle makes sense. We realize that the actual funding formula relies solely on the number of pupils and therefore obviously penalizes the Franco-Ontarian schools, which are mostly smaller in number. When will you guarantee the Franco-Ontarian schools the minimum vital funding required so that they may respect the requirements of your own ministry? When will your government respect its constitutional obligations toward the francophone community?

Hon Mrs Witmer: I'll just make a couple of points regarding the French-language funding. First of all, in 2001-02, we increased funding by \$29.7 million, or 4.3%, over the previous year. In 2002-03, we increased the funding 7.4%, despite the fact that enrolment decreased by about 1%. And this year, 2003-04, we are increasing the funding by almost \$64 million. That's an increase of 8.5% while the enrolment is decreasing about 2.5%.

I'd also mention to the member opposite that we have recently signed the Canada-Ontario special agreement for the implementation of French-language school governance. That was signed on June 17, 1998, by Canadian Heritage and the Ontario Ministry of Education. It's a cost-sharing agreement for a period of five years, and each level of government provided \$90 million.

We're going to continue to make sure that we provide funding—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I'm afraid the minister's time is up.

TIRE DUMPS

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): My question is to the Minister of Health. Minister, there is a very serious public health threat in Norwich township: an illegal tire dump with 350,000 tires piled two storeys high. I toured this site and it's truly unbelievable—a cesspool of mosquito larvae, a breeding ground for West Nile virus. Local health unit officials have indicated that there is no way they can larvicide the tires because of the way they are piled up.

Officials from the Ministry of the Environment have indicated that the \$1 million announced for tire cleanup is not guaranteed to go to cleanup of this site. The local fire chief estimates it will cost the entire \$1 million to clean up that site alone. That doesn't include the 15 to 20 other sites that exist around the province.

Minister, two days ago in this House you spoke of the commitment of the Premier to ensure that the resources are there to deal with the very real dangers to the public health from West Nile virus. Will you commit today to ensure the necessary funding and immediate cleanup of this West Nile breeding ground?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I'll refer this to the Minister of the Environment.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): We have taken steps, as a matter of fact, to ensure that those tire dumps around the province are sprayed with larvicide. We understand it's a situation that could be a breeding ground for West Nile, and the Ministry of the Environment has moved proactively and quickly to ensure that those tire dumps will in fact be dealt with.

With respect to the tire dumps themselves, we have struck a WDO. One of the first orders I did was to deal with the tire situations and the tire dumps in Ontario. I've had a number of conversations with my caucus members.

A few of them, including the Minister of Agriculture, have met with me personally, and every single time they have come to me, I've addressed the concerns. We have the WDO and we're moving forward in the very near future on the very serious tire dumps—I would say the very unsafe and most dramatic problems in the province.

I heard what you said. We are larviciding. We are spraying those tire dumps for West Nile virus and we're moving forward in the very near future to begin the cleanup of some of the worst tire dumps in the province.

Mr Peters: I recognize that the Minister of the Environment answered the question, but this is an extremely important health issue.

Local businessman Ron Heleniak, who lives next door to this site, has three small children and he's very concerned about the health and safety of his family. West Nile poses a very real threat to his family and to local citizens in that area, and it becomes more urgent daily.

This has been brought to your attention. The minister talks about addressing concerns, but this issue has been out there since 1996. CBC's Disclosure has undertaken a program, the Toronto Star has written an article, and The New PL has covered it. Mr Heleniak has written to you, to Minister Stockwell, to former Minister Witmer and to Minister Hardeman. Yet since 1996, seven years later, nothing has happened. Ron Heleniak described the situation best by saying, "This thing has been nothing but a ring-around-the-rosie farce, with one jurisdiction passing the buck to another." We saw that today, where health passes it to environment, and environment will pass it back to health.

Minister, you're responsible for safeguarding the health of our citizens. You've said you would do what it takes to protect us from the West Nile virus. This is a disaster waiting to happen. I'm asking again, will the Minister of Health take the leadership role that you promised and commit to having this site cleaned up now?

Hon Mr Stockwell: Mr Speaker, I gave him the answer, and I think it was a fair answer and a fair response. We understand there is an issue. But to be fair to you and your side of the House, when we introduced legislation to strike the WDO, to in fact do just that—clean up the tire dumps around the province—what did you do? You voted against the legislation. You voted against the very legislation that we were putting in place to go about cleaning up the tire dumps, to put the blue box recycling on the front burner for glass returns, and so on and so forth.

So I ask you, why would you stand in your place and tell me about tire dumps when you voted against the very legislation we put forward that will deal with the tire dumps? I'm not blaming you. We took leadership, we made a decision, and even with your silly response, which was opposing the legislation, we said, "We've got to provide leadership; we've got to clean up these tire dumps," and we're doing just that in spite of you.

VISITORS

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I know members will want to join with me in welcoming Mr Blake Roberts, president of the Alberta PC youth association, and Andrew Highfield, who is a member of that association. They're in the west gallery. I know they are accompanied, or they were accompanied, today by Mr Dave Priscoe, who is the vice-president, English youth, for the national PC association of Canada. Welcome.

Interjections.

PETITIONS

ALUMINUM SMELTER

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): In the din of this House, I have a very important petition to present.

"Regarding cleanup of the abandoned smelter site in Georgina:

"Whereas the abandoned aluminum smelter located on Warden Avenue in the town of Georgina has been deemed to have heavy metals exceeding the Ministry of the Environment guidelines; and

"Whereas the site is adjacent to a wetland that leads to the Maskinonge River feeding into Lake Simcoe;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the Ministry of the Environment to conduct a full environmental assessment of this site, followed by a cleanup of the full smelter site."

I affix my signature. I'm in complete agreement with this.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Petitions? Further petitions? There are no more petitions? I'm actually shocked. Do you have one there?

Mr Bradley: I have another set of petitions here.

The Speaker: OK, the member for St Catharines.

Mr Bradley: I have a set of petitions that are similar to the last ones but have a different stamp on them. They once again read the following—I wish my staff had brought down all the petitions I have up in my office, so I could read them.

"Regarding cleanup of the abandoned smelter site in Georgina:

"Whereas the abandoned aluminum smelter located on Warden Avenue in the town of Georgina has been deemed to have heavy metals exceeding the Ministry of the Environment guidelines; and

"Whereas the site is adjacent to a wetland that leads to the Maskinonge River feeding into Lake Simcoe;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the Ministry of the Environment to conduct a full environmental assessment of this site, followed by a cleanup of the full smelter site."

That's another raft of these petitions.

SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas some motorists are recklessly endangering the lives of children by not obeying the highway traffic law requiring them to stop for school buses with their warning lights activated;

"Whereas the current law has no teeth to protect the children who ride the school buses of Ontario, and who are at risk and their safety is in jeopardy;

"Whereas the current school bus law is difficult to enforce, since not only is the licence plate number required, but positive identification of the driver and vehicle as well, which makes it extremely difficult to obtain a conviction;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the measures contained in private member's Bill 112, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to protect children while on school buses, presented by Pat Hoy, MPP, Chatham-Kent-Essex, be immediately enacted....

"Bill 112 imposed liability on the owner of a vehicle that fails to stop for a school bus that has its overhead red signal lights flashing and....

"We ask for the support of all members of the Legislature."

The signatures on this petition are from residents of Windsor, and I too have signed it.

1530

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would just like to be certain that Mr Bradley's office got the message that they should bring down all the petitions in his office now so he may deal with them now.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Now we've got an influx.

GARDE D'ENFANTS

M. Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): J'ai une pétition en français à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario, appuyant les garderies à 10 \$ par jour.

« Attendu que 70% des femmes de l'Ontario ayant des enfants de moins de 12 ans sont sur le marché du travail;

« Attendu que, elles et leurs familles ont absolument besoin de services de garde de qualité, sûrs et abordables;

« Attendu que l'étude sur la petite enfance réalisée pour le gouvernement conservateur par le D^r Fraser Mustard et l'honorable Margaret McCain a conclu que les services de garde de qualité favorisent un développement harmonieux des enfants; et

« Attendu que le gouvernement a réduit le financement pour les garderies réglementées plutôt que d'appuyer les familles ontariennes en investissant dans l'apprentissage et les soins offerts aux jeunes enfants;

« Pour ces motifs nous, soussignés, demandons que le gouvernement de l'Ontario adopte le plan du NPD pour

des espaces de garderie à 10 \$ par jour, et qu'il commence par réduire la totalité des frais de garde pour les enfants de deux ans à cinq ans actuellement inscrits dans des garderies réglementées; que le gouvernement alloue des capitaux permanents pour agrandir les garderies existantes et pour en construire de nouvelles; que le gouvernement finance l'équité salariale pour le personnel, et qu'il crée de nouveaux espaces de garderies à 10 \$ par jour dans cette province. »

J'appuie cette pétition.

AUDIOLOGY SERVICES

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): I have a petition addressed to the Legislature of Ontario.

"Whereas services delisted by the Harris government now exceed \$100 million in total;

"Whereas Ontarians depend on audiologists for the provision of qualified hearing assessments and hearing aid prescriptions;

"Whereas the new Harris government policy will virtually eliminate access to publicly funded audiology assessments across vast regions of Ontario;

"Whereas this new Harris government policy is virtually impossible to implement in underserved areas across Ontario;

"Whereas this policy will lengthen waiting lists for patients and therefore have a detrimental effect on the health of these Ontarians;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Ontario Legislature to demand the Harris government move immediately to permanently fund audiologists directly for the provision of audiology services."

It's signed by about 12 individuals. I agree with the petition and sign it accordingly.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): It's Shirley Crispin day again. Shirley Crispin went out again knocking on doors and got about 2,000 signatures on the following petition. It says, "We deserve better: it's time for a raise." I've got to wear my glasses because I'm getting to the point where I can't read without them.

"To the Ontario Provincial Legislature:

"Because social assistance rates were slashed by 21.6% in 1995, and with the increases to the cost of living that cut is worth about 34.4% today; and

"Because current social assistance rates do not allow recipients to meet their cost of living; and

"Because the people of Ontario deserve an adequate standard of living and are guaranteed such by the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; and

"Because the jury at the inquest into the death of Kimberly Rogers recommended that social assistance rates be reviewed so that they reflect actual costs of living;

"We demand that the Ontario government immediately increase the shelter portion of Ontario Works and Ontario disability support program benefits to the average Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp rent levels and index social assistance to the cost of living."

I have signed this petition.

MORTGAGE INTEREST DEDUCTIBILITY

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas in a recently released Tory platform entitled *The Road Ahead*, Ernie Eves promised to implement mortgage interest deductibility if his government is re-elected; and

"Whereas countless economists and tax specialists have pronounced mortgage interest deductibility to be unaffordable and bad public policy; and

"Whereas in a Toronto Star article published on April 16, 2003, Ernie Eves was quoted as saying, while in his role as finance minister to the former Premier, Mike Harris, referring to this scheme, 'When I presented the cost to the Premier of the day, he asked me what drugs I was on. "You can't go there," he said';

"Whereas the people of Ontario recognize that the Tories' proposal to implement mortgage interest deductibility is unaffordable, irresponsible and reckless public policy;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to determine, when crafting the Progressive Conservative platform, the answer to Premier Mike Harris's question, that time, when he was asked in his role as finance minister."

I agree with that and I sign my name to the petition.

NATIONAL CHILD BENEFIT SUPPLEMENT

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I have yet another petition. This one says, "Stop the Clawback! Give the Children Back their Money."

"Whereas one in five children in Ontario lives in poverty;

"Whereas, as part of the national child tax benefit program the federal government gives a supplement to low-income families across the country to begin to address child poverty;

"Whereas that money, up to approximately \$100 per month per child, is meant to give our poorest and most vulnerable children a better chance in life;

"Whereas in Ontario, the Conservative government deducts the child benefit supplement dollar for dollar from those living on social assistance;

"Whereas this is leaving our province's neediest children without the extra money they desperately need to begin to climb out of poverty;

"Whereas all children are entitled to a fair chance at life;

"Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, call on the provincial government of Ontario stop the

clawback of the national child tax benefit supplement and ensure this federal money reaches all low-income families in Ontario."

I've signed that petition.

AUDIOLOGY SERVICES

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough-Rouge River): I have some petitions here coming in in numbers.

"Whereas services delisted by the Harris-Eves government now exceed \$100 million in total; and

"Whereas Ontarians depend on audiologists for the provision of qualified hearing assessments and hearing aid prescriptions; and

"Whereas the new Harris-Eves government policy will virtually eliminate access to publicly funded audiology assessments across vast regions of Ontario; and

"Whereas this new Harris-Eves government policy is virtually impossible to implement in underserved areas across Ontario; and

"Whereas this policy will lengthen waiting lists for patients and therefore have a detrimental effect on the health of these Ontarians;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Ontario Legislature to demand that the Harris-Eves government move immediately to permanently fund audiologists directly for the provision of audiology services."

I am going to affix my signature in total agreement with this petition.

GARDE D'ENFANTS

M. Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I have many petitions and I'm trying to present most of them today, this one from les gens de Timmins qui écrivent:

« Appuyons des garderies à \$10 par jour: pétition à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario:

« Attendu que 70% des femmes de l'Ontario ayant des enfants de moins de 12 ans sont sur le marché du travail;

« Attendu que, elles et leurs familles ont absolument besoin de services de garde de qualité, sûrs et abordables;

« Attendu que l'étude sur la petite enfance réalisée pour le gouvernement conservateur par le D^r Fraser Mustard et l'honorable Margaret McCain a conclu que les services de garde de qualité favorisent un développement harmonieux des enfants; et

« Attendu que le gouvernement a réduit le financement pour les garderies réglementées plutôt que d'appuyer les familles ontariennes en investissant dans l'apprentissage et les soins offerts aux jeunes enfants;

« Pour ces motifs nous, soussignés, demandons que le gouvernement de l'Ontario adopte le plan du NPD pour des espaces de garderie à 10 \$ par jour, et qu'il commence par réduire la totalité des frais de garde pour les enfants de deux ans à cinq ans actuellement inscrits dans des garderies réglementées; que le gouvernement alloue des capitaux permanents pour agrandir les garderies existantes et pour en construire de nouvelles;

que le gouvernement finance l'équité salariale pour le personnel, et qu'il crée de nouveaux espaces de garderies à 10 \$ par jour dans cette province. »

J'ai soussigné cette pétition.

1540

AUDIOLOGY SERVICES

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Listen: Our Hearing is Important!

"Whereas services delisted by the Ontario provincial government now exceed \$100 million in total;

"Whereas Ontarians depend on audiologists for the provision of qualified hearing assessments and hearing aid prescriptions;

"Whereas the new provincial government policy will virtually eliminate access to publicly funded audiology assessments across vast regions of Ontario;

"Whereas this provincial government policy is virtually impossible to implement in underserved areas across Ontario; and

"Whereas this policy will lengthen waiting lists for patients and therefore have a detrimental effect on the health of these Ontarians;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned 550 residents from across Ontario, petition the Ontario Legislature to demand that the Ernie Eves government move immediately to permanently fund audiologists directly for the provision of audiology services."

I'm in full agreement and have affixed my signature hereto.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have yet another petition, thanks to the government House leader, that has been brought in. It is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas long-term-care facilities in this province are understaffed, underfunded and ignored by the current government;

"Whereas many residents of St Catharines and other communities in Ontario are unable to find a family doctor as a result of the growing doctor shortage we have experienced during the tenure of the Harris-Eves governments;

"Whereas cancer patients in Ontario requiring radiation treatment face unacceptable delays and are often forced to travel to other jurisdictions to receive medical attention;

"Whereas many prescription drugs which would help patients with a variety of medical conditions such as macular degeneration, multiple sclerosis, arthritis, diabetes and heart failure are inadequately covered by OHIP;

"Whereas long waiting lists for diagnostic tests such as MRIs, CT scans and ultrasounds are jeopardizing the health of many individuals already facing serious illness;

"Whereas the Harris-Eves government has now spent over \$401 million"—I might add "and rising," but that's not in the petition—"on blatantly partisan government advertising in the form of glossy brochures and television and radio ads;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the Conservative government of Ernie Eves to immediately end their abuse of public office and terminate any further expenditure on political advertising and to invest this money in health and long-term care in the province of Ontario."

I affix my signature as I'm in vehement and complete agreement with this petition.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BACK TO SCHOOL (TORONTO CATHOLIC ELEMENTARY) AND EDUCATION AND PROVINCIAL SCHOOLS NEGOTIATIONS AMENDMENT ACT, 2003 LOI DE 2003 PRÉVOYANT LE RETOUR À L'ÉCOLE (SECTEUR ÉLÉMENTAIRE DU CONSEIL CATHOLIQUE DE TORONTO) ET MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'ÉDUCATION ET LA LOI SUR LA NÉGOCIATION COLLECTIVE DANS LES ÉCOLES PROVINCIALES

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 27, 2003, on the motion for second reading of Bill 28, An Act to resolve a labour dispute between the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association and the Toronto Catholic District School Board and to amend the Education Act and the Provincial Schools Negotiations Act / Projet de loi 28, Loi visant à régler le conflit de travail opposant l'Association des enseignantes et des enseignants catholiques anglo-ontariens et le conseil scolaire de district appelé Toronto Catholic District School Board et modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation et la Loi sur la négociation collective dans les écoles provinciales.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The member for Trinity-Spadina had the floor.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I want to welcome the citizens of Ontario who are watching this political debate we're having. I'm happy to be the New Democratic Party critic for educational matters—elementary, secondary and post-secondary—and happy to debate as long as I can this odious Bill 28 entitled An Act to resolve a labour dispute between the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association and the Toronto Catholic District School Board and to amend the Education Act and the Provincial Schools Negotiations Act.

This bill is about forcing teachers back to school. The Minister of Labour, who spoke at length to this bill yesterday, didn't say as much, and the title pretends to assuage the back-to-work legislation. When they say,

"An Act to resolve a labour dispute," it's designed to kick the teachers back into the schoolrooms, where I'm assuming John Baird would say they belong.

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs): That's where they want to be.

Mr Marchese: That's where the teachers would want to be. So says the Minister of Energy.

I'm going to speak to why this bill is odious, and I will speak later on to my disagreement with Liberal Bill 61, which they speak of as the clear bill, but it too is back-to-work legislation for teachers. I will have an opportunity to speak to both of those bills as time goes on.

But, Speaker, I want to tell you and those citizens watching that this government has beaten up on teachers since 1995. This is not about resolving disputes between teachers and the boards of education because they're such nice people on the other side; this is about beating up on teachers because it's politically convenient to do so. As they beat up on welfare recipients for seven, eight years, they are doing the same thing with teachers day in and day out. I will show you how they've done that for the last seven years and how they would hope to continue doing that for the next four years—before this election gets called.

Yesterday, the Minister of Labour stood up on his feet and said, with some humour and irony, that it's "time for a new maturity" to solve problems between teachers and boards—a new maturity. I'm assuming by the "new maturity" he's referring to odious Bill 28, which would force teachers back into the classroom. That, as I read it, is how he classifies a new, mature relationship between teachers and boards of education. He would kick them back into the classroom without allowing for any collective bargaining to take place, and feels happy about it—a tradition we've had for a long time in this country.

Last week, the Minister of Labour, the Premier and the Minister of Education, all three of them, stood up to introduce Bill 28, as if it took more than one minister to kick teachers back. They needed the Premier as well to help them out. It's an easy bill. Any one of those ministers could have done it, but they colluded together to give each other strength, presumably to get the teachers back into the classroom. Why would you need the massive strength of three people to beat up on teachers when one would do? They want to say to the public that there is a great deal of collaboration in the cabinet and in the caucus, when they in that caucus and cabinet are quite happy to rule that teachers should be back in their classrooms. Happily, they do it.

The Minister of Labour talks about this bill protecting students from harmful work-to-rule, as if we've never had work-to-rule before. Why, these Catholic teachers, some of whom are here today, were on work-to-rule for a mere eight days while they were doing their duties as teachers in the classrooms. This government stands up and says they want to protect students. How so? If teachers are in their classrooms teaching their students, how is it harming those students? They are doing their

duty to teach and, through the collective bargaining process, are working to rule and not withdrawing their teaching services.

The Minister of Labour says we need a new framework for labour peace, and by that I'm assuming he's referring to his interest, and the interest of this Premier, in abolishing teacher strikes, which I will speak to a little later. Is that the kind of framework that he wants to establish labour peace? How do you achieve labour peace with teachers when you're about to tell them you are going to avoid and prevent lockouts from now on, and will prevent and eliminate the right to strike from now on, should you get re-elected? How does that establish labour peace? I don't see it, but Ernie Eves, the Premier, seems to see it as a good solution. The Minister of Labour talks about this as being a new framework for labour peace. It will bring no peace to our teachers. It will bring little peace to the relationship between teachers and this government and the relationship between teachers and boards. It will do nothing of the kind.

1550

The Minister of Labour says, "Unfortunately the bill is caught up in politics." As if the odious nature of this bill wasn't evident to him or the public, he speaks of opposition parties presumably playing politics with a highly political bill. This is why I say he does this with some humour and irony when he says, "It's the opposition playing politics, but the bill is not about politics at all." Do you see how dumb this kind of politics is when ministers can stand up and say those things?

He accuses the Liberals, of course, of being in collusion—no, he made reference to the fact that the Tories were in collusion with the school board and the school board was in collusion with the Tories. I found that amusing too, although I must admit that if I did agree with the Minister of Labour, it's on this point. I have to admit that when the Liberals were attacking Joe Carnevale, the chair of the separate school board, I thought, "Hmm, this is interesting. Why would the Liberals attack a Liberal? One of their own," so he claims. I'm sure that is the truth, and I know this because I know they were trying to recruit him to run against me as a Liberal but he declined, and that was nice of him.

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Minister of Public Safety and Security): Mike Colle's daughter is on that board.

Mr Marchese: Mike Colle's son, I believe, is a trustee on that board, but that's a different matter.

They accuse the board of being in collusion, and by that I assume they mean Conservative collusion, as if Joe Carnevale is a Conservative, and presumably the board. But the point is that the majority of those trustees are Liberals.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): What? Do you mean Liberals are locking out teachers?

Mr Marchese: Liberals locked out these Catholic teachers. After eight days of a work-to-rule, the board, dominated by Liberals, decided to lock out the teachers. I

say, "How could Liberals do that?" This is why Gerard Kennedy, the critic, immediately had to protect himself and to say, "He's a Tory," or, "The board is Tory-inclined." He has to, as a way of diverting attention from the fact that the chair is a Liberal and so many board members are Liberals.

I found that equally amusing to see because of the duplicitous nature of the tactics of the Liberals, to be fair.

Mr Kormos: It's of some real concern.

Mr Marchese: It ought to be of concern to the teachers, because many teachers like Liberals because they see them as the party that would support and promote their interests as a union. But I'm telling you that Liberals don't like unions. In spite of what the Tories say about the Liberals being in bed, so to speak, with the unions, it isn't true. Not once in this place have Liberals supported a labour initiative—not once that I'm aware of.

Mr Kormos: What about the anti-scab legislation?

Mr Marchese: In fact, when we introduced anti-scab legislation when we were in government, the Liberals were there to vote against.

Mr Kormos: What about the right of farm workers to organize?

Mr Marchese: The right of farm workers to organize: New Democrats were there saying farm workers ought to have the right to organize. Where were the Liberals? Against, of course.

You see, teachers don't know that, and it saddens me. They should know the clear position of Liberals.

Interjections.

Mr Marchese: And so, Monsieur Beaubien, mon ami, monsieur le Président, people need to know. I know it hurts you a little bit, un petit peu. But I have to put it on the record—I do—because it hurts me too. It was unconscionable, I said, when this board locked out the teachers after a mere eight days of work-to-rule. I said, "How could they do that?" How could a Liberal-dominated board do that? It was incomprehensible and politically unacceptable. You would never dream that Liberals could be capable of such a thing. But they carried the day on that board. How? It's a question teachers need to ask.

I am convinced a lot of teachers are not happy with that board after what it's done to them. I'm convinced of it. I believe that in the course of these events of the last week and a half they've been able to see the politics playing out within the union, within the membership, or the position of the Liberal Party, to which I will come in a short moment—

Mr Kormos: This is a remarkable revelation.

Mr Marchese: It's a revelation for those who don't know; this is true. For those of us who know it, it's something that we say in passing, and yes, we say it and it hurts us, but for those who didn't know where the Liberals stood here today and yesterday and last week, and in that board, they certainly will be surprised as more and more information comes out.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: You have to give me some time, Peter. I've got to get through this material. You understand.

Mr Kormos: Where is Dalton on the right of teachers to strike?

Mr Marchese: I need you in this discussion. Well, Dalton is coming. It's all here, laid out. It's coming.

The Tories have a very, very dirty history as it relates to allowing unions—yes, we call them unions—the right to collectively bargain. It is a right not easily come by. It is a right that workers had to fight for. The Tories, if they have their way in the next election, will get rid of the right to strike for teachers. Why? Because it's politically expedient to do so. Because about 40% or 50% of the public says, "Yes, they shouldn't be able to strike."

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): You didn't read the legislation, Rosie.

Mr Marchese: I will get to that.

This legislation does not eliminate the right to strike—no, no. It does two things. One, it says teachers will go back to school; it's back-to-work legislation. Secondly, part II of the bill redefines the duties of a teacher and redefines them in this manner: by allowing for regulations to happen where changes can be made by regulation, do not have to come here in the form of a bill to the scrutiny of the opposition or teachers or others to see what those regulatory changes are. Part II changes the nature of the duties of a teacher, and it doesn't do it today as much as it will do it tomorrow. Why it would do this is beyond me.

Why not just simply do what the Liberals have done and say, "We have back-to-work legislation"? Do that, part I, like the Liberals, and get it out of the way. Why do you need part II? You can achieve part II if you get re-elected. If you don't get re-elected, it doesn't really matter. So why put yourself through the ringer when you don't have to? The Liberals said, "If you just have part I," which they call the clean bill, "and send teachers back to the classroom, we will support it. It's not a problem." So why have a part II when you could easily have the collusion of the Liberals to support you? This, to me, is a bit incomprehensible.

I ask myself, do they want this bill to go through? Do they not want it to go through? Was it deliberately done in such a way as to extend this out there so the public would love them for having a bill that forces them back to work? Is this the politics of it? Remember that Brad Clark, the Minister of Labour, said, "There's no politics on our side." That's what he said yesterday. It was a bit comical.

What's the game? What is the strategy? I'm trying to understand it. I've been around for a while. What is the strategy of part II of the bill, which redefines the duties of a teacher in the future in the form of regulations? What's the point of that? Because if you form the government, you can do that any time.

We say that teachers need to be allowed the time and the right to negotiate a fair agreement with their boards. The Catholic board did not permit that to happen. They locked the teachers out eight days after a work-to-rule.

What does this government do immediately after? They introduce back-to-work legislation. No sooner did the Catholic board say, "Locked out" than Eves was there saying, "Back-to-work legislation." It was in lockstep. One led to the other.

1600

I don't see this as collusion between a Liberal board and a Conservative government. I see it as collusion of interests; that is, the Catholic board said, "How beautifully convenient it is that this government, in its platform on a Friday afternoon or evening," whatever time it was, "announced their interest in, should they be re-elected, ending the right to strike." The government said, "It is convenient for us to introduce back-to-work legislation"; the Catholic board decided, "This is the time to lock them out," because the Catholic board probably suspected or thought, "They will do the dirty job for us," and they said, "We're only too happy to oblige because we want to introduce such legislation that kicks them back to the classroom, because it suits our interests." So you see how the commonality of interests comes together, the convergence of political interests. One, a Liberal Party-dominated board, and the other a wonderfully Conservative government that wants to beat up on teachers at every point imaginable, because they love to beat you up.

To be fair, it's not because they like to beat you up or because they don't like you; I don't think that's the case. Mr Guzzo, I don't think that's the case, because I think you like them. It's political expediency. They beat you up and 50% of the public says, "Right on," because they promote the idea that you simply are overpaid and underworked.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: Say it again.

Hon Mr Baird: They're not being paid. They need to be paid. They want to be in the classroom—

Mr Marchese: So the Minister of Energy says they need to be paid, want to be paid and deserve a good salary. So I ask the Minister of Energy, who wasn't here earlier on, why is it that the Minister of Energy has such a keen interest on bringing a bill immediately after the separate school board locks them out?

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: John Baird, listen to me. Normally, Minister of Energy, you understand this. John, look at me. John, you have to look at me for me to talk to you. Normally—

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Order.

Mr Marchese: OK, Speaker, through you.

Normally, you have teachers and boards negotiating. It takes time. You understand that, right? How much time did you give the teachers and the board to negotiate? You gave them no time. You absolutely gave them no time.

Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa West-Nepean): That was Bob Rae. That wasn't you; that was Bob Rae.

Mr Marchese: Mr Guzzo is right when he says—*mea culpa*—I was a part of that; probably quite right.

Here's a social contract problem. I will admit it was a serious issue. When we say, "They cut this, they cut that, they cut that when they were in government," Liberals at the same time say, "They had a high deficit, high deficit. They should have poured more money into this. Oh, no, high deficit into that." With Liberals you can't have it any which way because whatever way you turn you're going to get hurt, because they say they'd cut in this area when they're in government in a recession, and then they say, "But they caused the recession. In addition, they caused deficits as well." Poor NDPers. It's hard to work under those kinds of restrictions, isn't it?

Interjections.

Mr Marchese: The social contract, through you, Speaker, to my good buddy David Caplan, was designed to save jobs. It was designed to save jobs, and teachers had Rae days, of course. I think a lot of teachers said, "Better to have nine Rae days than to be kicked out." I believe that's true.

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): I don't think so.

Mr Marchese: Some people didn't like it, it's true, and some unions even said that maybe we should have fired workers instead of doing the social contract. That was a choice we had.

I put this to you, good citizens: if in a good economy Tories could devastate health, education, post-secondary education, social services, Ministry of the Environment, Ministry of Natural Resources, what would the Tories have done in a recession? If they could take billions out of our services now, in a good economy, what would the Tories have done? And I put it to you, good citizens, what would the Liberals have done in a recession?

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): They would have hid.

Mr Marchese: Who knows what they would have done? They would have been running from one end of the room to the other. But I can tell you, they would have devastated the services that we tried to protect. And we tried to protect the most vulnerable. John Baird, you would not have protected the vulnerable. The most vulnerable citizens, people on ODSP, those who have a disability—if you could beat them up today in a good economy, imagine what you would have done in a bad economy, where there was no money. If you could beat up on tenants in a good economy, what would you have done in a bad economy?

Mr Martin: It's hard to imagine.

Mr Marchese: I can't.

If you beat up on the homeless in a good economy, what would you have done in a bad economy? If we have no money in a good economy for women who are abused, what would they have done in a bad economy? What would the Liberals have done? Think about those questions as you reflect on this upcoming election: what would Liberals and Tories have done in a bad economy? Because I tell you—and I don't wish it—economies go around like this, and there is a bad one coming every eight years or so, give or take a year. Recessions come,

and neither Tories nor Liberals nor New Democrats can prevent them. When they come, and there are no jobs, you will be in deep doo-doo, good citizens, because the Liberal Party and the Conservative Party will hurt you a lot more than you think they could.

Yes, in 1990-95, the NDP had some strikes. The Liberals remind us of this and the Tories remind us of this, but New Democrats remember 45 days that teachers were out on strike. And another one wasn't 45 days but it was close.

Interjections.

Mr Marchese: What does it constitute for you, David? How many days would you give—

Mr Caplan: No finding of jeopardy?

Mr Marchese: Let me get to that in a moment. How many days would you give? Your bill sends them back to work today. It would have sent them back to work last week, but I'll get back to that in a moment. When we had strikes, teachers were out for 45 days in two strikes and the other one was 30 or 35 days. Think about it. Under this government, the John Baird government, you're out there in no time at all, in barely two weeks, and in this bill that we're dealing with, you were out right away. As soon as the Catholic board locked you out, they had a bill ready to go. They gave no time for negotiations to happen.

The Liberals are saying, "We have a clean bill." They call it a clean bill, the clean bill to get students back into the classroom. Yesterday, Mario Sergio spoke, as well as Gerard Kennedy, and they all have the same line: getting kids back; the clean bill. The Liberal clean bill would legislate teachers back to the classroom today. We don't support that. We believe teachers need to have the time and the right to negotiate.

Mr Caplan: Not when you were in government, Rosario.

Mr Marchese: When we were in government, David, as I already pointed out, teachers were on strike for 45 days. How many days do you want?

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: There was a jeopardy ruling on two of them, this is true; and on the other one, over 30, 35 days. Let me explain the jeopardy ruling to you if you don't understand it, but I'm sure you do. The Education Relations Commission rules when there is jeopardy, meaning students are threatened by losing their year, and you've got to respond. As a government you have a tough choice to make. After 45 days, what do you do? How many days would the Liberals give? Two? One? Three? Four? Five? What's the number?

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Mr Martin: What is it now, seven?

Mr Marchese: On average it's about 10, 15 days, but it's been less and less every time. Have you noticed the pattern? It was about two weeks in the first few strikes that we experienced with this government, and then it was less, maybe 12 days. This time around, it's very few days, to the point where they want to abolish the right to strike.

But I want to tell you, from 1998 to 1999, there were 30 disruptions—the same figures David has; these figures, David; you have others—in the form of strikes, work-to-rule or lockouts, and in 1996-97, 14 disruptions in the form of strikes, work-to-rule or lockouts.

This is a government that typifies battle, that enjoys battle, that is pugilistic in its very nature, that is combative, because it needs to divide societies. It wants societies to attack each other. That's why it creates an enemy—welfare recipients, teachers—so the other half of the population can say, "Here are our enemies. We know who they are and we will attack them." That's what they've done.

I remind you Conservative young types behind the Speaker's bench—some of you may or may not have been here—Snobelen said he was going to create a crisis. Mercifully, he has left us to tend to his cattle in Oklahoma, but when he was the minister, he designed a crisis in order to fix an educational system that needed not to be fixed. He deliberately caused a crisis in order to injure it, and he's done that. Mike Harris has done that. This cabinet has done that. This government has done that from the beginning.

Remember when they attacked the trustees? They went after the trustees and they said, "Oh, trustees are so political." Mike Harris wasn't political. Every Minister of Education who followed wasn't political. The other Minister of Education, David—help me—

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Deputy Premier, Minister of Education): Johnson.

Mr Marchese: —Johnson wasn't political. Janet Ecker wasn't political. Elizabeth is not political; she's just a gentle lady who's just a good soul. They are not political. But trustees? Ah, they needed to be fixed, neutered, because they were ideo, they were political. If you get elected as trustees, you shouldn't be political. It's an election to political office, but you shouldn't be political. But the education ministers and Harris and Eves, they're not political. Oh, no, they wouldn't do that.

They said, "Trustees are overpaid. MPPs are not, but trustees are overpaid, so we are going to reduce their salaries to \$5,000 a year."

Hon Mr Baird: How much did you used to make as a trustee?

Mr Marchese: Better still, John, how much do you think they deserve? And how much do you think you deserve?

Hon Mr Baird: What did you make? That's the question.

Mr Marchese: But what do you deserve as an MPP, John, is the question.

Hon Mr Baird: I don't think I should decide on this issue.

Mr Marchese: But you have no problem deciding for trustees how much they should earn. What about you? You have no problem deciding for yourselves, but you have a difficulty with trustees who are overpaid and political, so you reduce their salaries to a measly \$5,000 a year.

It's a tough job. I've been there. I quit teaching to be able to do that full-time. I believe being a trustee is a good thing. It's an important job. Some of us were good; some of us were not so good. Some of us people liked; some of us people didn't like. It just depends on your point of view, and there are many points of view, but I believe the job of a trustee is an important one. That's why I quit teaching and did it full-time. That could have been a period of political naïveté on my part, to think I could believe in it so much that I would give up my teacher's salary just to be a trustee for \$7,000. And now the very same people are doing it for \$5,000, because John Baird and Elizabeth Witmer, the minister, deign that their job should be paid only \$5,000 because it's not important and because they were too highly political.

Remember the attacks on the bureaucracy? Tories love to use that word. We're going to cut the bureaucracy because, boy, could we save millions by cutting there. If only we could cut into Eves's bureaucracy office, we would probably save billions there. But to stock up and stuff up Ernie Eves's office is OK; that's not bureaucracy. To stuff up and beef up the Education Quality and Accountability Office in the order of \$50 million to test kids, that's OK; that's not a bureaucracy. But everything else that boards do is bureaucracy. If you ask the minister or the Minister of Energy what is bureaucracy, they won't be able to tell you. Maybe they will in their two-minute retort, but I don't believe they will. I don't believe they know. They just have to say "bureaucracy," because the public hates bureaucracy. Whatever it is, they hate it. So the Tories went after bureaucracy, bureaucrats.

Then they said, "We're going to amalgamate because all these little boards"—imagine amalgamating the city of Toronto Board of Education, a huge board, with all of the other metro cities in the one borough. Imagine that. People were having a difficult time getting into 155 College St here, the board of education, to reach their trustees. Imagine having to now reach trustees from all over the old metro, now Toronto. There were no savings. It was designed to create a huge bureaucracy, which they did, all in the name of, presumably, facilitating board business.

This has been the most interventionist government that I have ever witnessed in this place. This has been the most centralist government that I have ever seen in this place. These are the Tories who decry bigness, normally. These are the Tories that like small, because small is better, yet they have created the biggest bureaucracy ever imaginable.

Talk about centralization of educational services. They took into their power education financing, took the power away from local boards to raise money so they could manage the dollars. And do you know why? They took money out of the board. It was designed to get their dirty little hands into the money the boards of education were getting from their local property taxes so they could claim they were increasing dollars as opposed to stealing

from each and every one of the boards, Catholic and public, across Ontario.

They are the most centralist, bureaucratic government micromanagers that I have ever, ever, ever seen. How do they get away with it? What is it about Ontarians that they can't see these things? I don't get it. They stole \$2 billion out of our educational system—\$2.1 billion. How did they do that, while all along mocking Marchese when he would say, "You stole \$2 billion," by saying, "Ha ha ha. No, we put \$2 billion in, we didn't take \$2 billion out"? They would mock us each and every day as we did that.

They took educational assistants out of our school system. They took social workers. We lost guidance teachers, we lost music teachers, we lost physical education teachers, we lost gym teachers. We lost the community use of schools. Remember, people could go into their schools and use them for relatively free.

Mr Kormos: Air cadets, Boy Scouts, Girl Guides.

Mr Marchese: Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts are not able to get into those schools. Why? Because unless you have money to be able to rent now, you can't get in. Schools should open their doors as they did prior to 1997 when people—ordinary people, basketball associations, Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, senior citizens programs, child care programs, family programs, whoever or whatever it is. They should have those doors open, because schools belong to us, because schools are paid for by you, taxpayers and citizens—by you. They've closed, shut the doors, barred them. Unless you're wealthy—I don't think many of you watching this program are wealthy—those doors are shut to you and to most of us.

They have underfunded the collective agreements line that would allow teachers to negotiate some fairer agreements by close to \$1 billion. Then they announced that they put \$300 million in, and then they said, "Now we've done it. Everybody should be home and happy, teachers should be home, happy, and teaching, and they shouldn't be unhappy about possibly not having the fair wage they are entitled to." Why? Because they put in \$325 million and that ought to do it. "So we haven't adequately funded the line that deals with teachers and boards for several years, and then we give you some money back and we say, 'You shouldn't be whining. You should go back into your classroom and the kids should be able to go,' and they all should be happy."

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Interjection.

Mr Marchese: Say it louder so people can hear you.

Mr Kormos: It's like a mugger wanting credit for returning your empty wallet.

Mr Marchese: You see? People can hear that. I know people heard that. Can you believe it?

We have a problem on our hands. We do. We have a government that's unfriendly, pugilistic and mean to teachers, and I use that word "mean" politely. "Pugilistic" is a better word, don't you think? Antagonistic.

Mr Kormos: Outright hostile.

Mr Marchese: Outright hostile. Anything more? Think about it. Even vindictive; they've been vindictive, and not just with teachers but with everybody in this province. You don't dare play with the Tories. If you play with the Tories, they punish you. Talking about "deliberately hostile," what did they do to the teachers again? They said to the teachers, "You're not qualified. We need to test you," and they put together 14 courses, seven obligatory, seven voluntary. With those courses that don't apply to the teachers whatsoever, now they'll be competent. I dare not mention your name. Is that the way you do it? The way you accomplish your goal, and your minister knows, is to simply say to the public, "We're testing them." That's all that matters.

Do the tests work? It's irrelevant because it doesn't matter. All this government wants is for the public to believe that the teachers are being tested. That's all that matters. Is it effective? No. Is there such a tool anywhere in the universe, where there is a test designed that works? No. It's not the relevancy of the issue. It's politics. This is about politics and it's raw. It's so raw that you could just open up the skin.

It was funny to hear Mr Clark talk about how this bill unfortunately is caught up in politics. It makes it appear that somebody else is playing politics and not this government. It introduces changes to the curriculum in such haste, without preparation, in the beginning without books and no teacher development because, I guess, you're not ready. Once they've tested you, I guess you're ready, right? You don't need development.

Hasty curriculum changes that the students couldn't cope with—was my good, charming Minister Elizabeth Witmer there when people were falling through the cracks and when students were falling through the cracks, those who otherwise would be studying at a basic level, those who otherwise would be leaving in grade 10 or 11, those who are in a general program and those who would attempt to go the technical-commercial schools, by and large? They were falling through the cracks because of the new curriculum changes that were introduced in haste, with no professional development or support for teachers, and, best of all, no support for students.

Only in the last little while, in the last two months, has Minister Witmer gone to some school and said, "We're announcing \$50 million to help students at risk"—in the last two months. They introduced curriculum changes decades ago, and in just a couple of months they introduced a couple of million dollars to help students at risk. As if this minister, previous ministers and this government did not know that under this new curriculum, students would fall through the cracks. They take pride in saying, "Our curriculum changes are the best in the world. Kids either shape up or they ship out." How do you help those students that need help? Where is this government to say to those kids who need help, "We're here for you. We've got a hand for you," as opposed to saying, "We've got tests for you. If you don't pass, you're out, and if you pass them you're OK"? Those student tests are designed to test failure, not to help

students but to test failure. This government has never been there for students who are struggling.

How do they deal with the issue of lack of funds? They introduce a tax credit for private schools. They say, "This tax credit is not going to affect public education whatsoever." I say \$10 billion is taken out because of the income tax cuts to rich guys, not to me. I'm in the high category, and I happily pay my fair share—by the way, I want to. I'm in a good income category. I get a break, as opposed to someone earning \$40,000, \$50,000 or \$60,000. They get a couple of hundred dollars at the end of that tax break. Are you helping them, or are you helping people like me and you and those who are richer than you, like bankers who earn \$1.5 million and get \$120,000 at the end of the year? Rich people getting money back—can you believe it? It's just nuts: a tax credit for the rich.

Yesterday Mr Kennedy said—and I made a note of it because I was a bit surprised by it—the tax credit is only for secular schools. It's not true. While it is true that it goes to secular, independent schools such as Upper Canada College—do you know how much Upper Canada College students pay in tuition fees, Tony?

Mr Martin: No.

Mr Marchese: They pay \$15,000. If you shack up, it costs—who knows—probably \$20,000. Could you afford \$20,000 a year to send your kid there, even if you wanted to, with your income?

Mr Martin: No.

Mr Marchese: Who sends kids to Upper Canada College? People you know?

Mr Martin: No.

Mr Marchese: It's not people I know. They have incomes beyond imagination to afford to send little boys to Upper Canada College for \$15,000, and you are going to give them a tax credit up to \$7,000? You've got be nuts. You've got to be a nutty government to do that kind of stuff.

It goes to secular schools of that kind, but it also goes to other religious schools. Make no mistake about it, Mr Kennedy: while you're saying it goes to secular schools, it goes to other religious schools as well. They are sucking money out of our public system to give to rich people. Already \$60 million, give or take a couple of million, has been taken out in the first instalment. They just announced the second instalment, which will mean another \$60 million will go out this year—\$120 million, last year with this year once it gets announced, sucked out of our public system to feed whom? Banker types who make \$1.5 million. How can you justify that? How can you citizens watching this program, some of whom I know are Tories, tolerate this government doing that? How can you do that, and why wouldn't you punish this government? Hopefully, I venture to say, you will. I'm hearing more and more of you disenchanted with this government, and I'm happy to see that.

We need to restore sanity. We need to restore guidance teachers. We need to make sure small schools are in place, because they benefit communities. We need

to make sure educational assistants are back in the classrooms to help with special education needs, to help in the primary grades, to help teachers who are running after little kiddies, who can't teach because they've got to look after other little kiddies at the same time. We need educational assistants in those classrooms. We need youth counsellors in this Toronto board to help children at risk. Mr Christie fired them. Remember, Christie was the campaign manager for my good buddy Stockwell?

Mr Kormos: Is he your friend?

Mr Marchese: He's a friend.

Mr Kormos: Rosie, people are known by their friends.

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Mr Marchese: That's bad.

Christie was the campaign manager for Stockwell. Christie was hired by this government to depose the duly elected trustees of the Toronto public board.

Interjections.

Mr Marchese: I've got to make a speech, Peter, please. He had supervisors replace the duly elected board—

Interjections.

Mr Marchese: No, wait; I've got more to say. Hold on.

Three supervisors—Hamilton, Ottawa and Toronto taken over by supervisors. Why were supervisors appointed? Because boards refused to accept the fact that if they made the cuts they had to make to balance their budgets, they would be hurting students and they would be hurting the educational system. This government and this minister—gentle minister—deposed the elected trustees and imposed supervisors.

I remind you citizens and taxpayers watching, one and the same, that Rozanski was appointed by this government to review our education finances. He determined, after thousands of interviews, that this public Catholic system was underfunded in the order of \$2 billion. The minister and her government would mock the NDP when we said that, but Rozanski became the hope for me and the parents who said, "You've got to restore \$2 billion."

I say to the Minister of Education, Elizabeth Witmer, who is present today, that if she implemented the policies of Rozanski, boards of education, and in this instance the Toronto board, would have enough money to deal with their own problems. I suggest only one example: Rozanski made the recommendation that 5% be applied to the foundation grant, the per pupil grant. If you did that, Elizabeth, the Toronto board would have enough money to deal with the problem of underfunding that you have caused. You refuse to implement that particular policy. Why? She wants the supervisor, Christie, who is a Tory, to be there in charge of this public board because she and this government want to silence the Toronto public board so they do not, as we near an election, speak against this government, or have the power or the right to speak against this government. This is deliberate and highly political, designed to keep the Toronto board silenced to the bitter end. We could restore democracy,

ie, getting the trustees back in charge, by making sure that gentle Elizabeth Witmer would implement one of Rozanski's recommendations: to apply 5% of the foundation grant, which would give \$120 million—you know that—to the Toronto board and it would be able to deal with all of its problems. But our kind Elizabeth Witmer, Minister of Education, refuses to implement that particular initiative of Dr Rozanski, the man they appointed.

You've got to wonder, taxpayers and citizens—those of you who want to refer to yourselves as taxpayers—why this minister continues to do that. Because she wants to silence trustees as much as she wants to silence teachers. She, the Minister of Education, and Eves, the Premier, do not want teachers to have any rights to negotiate. They do not want them to negotiate a collective agreement in a fair manner. They want them to return to work by way of legislation, and so do the Liberals. The Liberals yesterday, in a motion presented by Kennedy, their education critic, introduced Bill 61, which Kennedy calls An Act to promote stability and goodwill in Toronto Catholic elementary schools. That bill forces you, teachers, to get back to school. It's not about getting kids in the classroom; it's about getting you into the schools, you teachers. It's forcing back-to-work legislation on you, except the problem is, teachers don't know that because they call it a goodwill kind of bill—a clean bill, they call it. It's the same thing as the Tories, except the Tories go further with their part II, which redefines duties of a teacher.

Just today, to support the New Democratic position that we are for fair, negotiated collective agreements, we want to say—

Mr Caplan: Not during the social contract.

Mr Marchese: What?

Mr Caplan: Not during the social contract.

Mr Marchese: I see. David wants to dig back, eh? Dig, David, dig.

Mr Caplan: It's true.

Mr Marchese: What is true to me is that, unlike you and Mr Kennedy—when I debated Mr Kennedy the other day on TVO, it was laughable, most humorous, to hear him say that it's the NDP that collapses when it comes to the issues of strikes. I couldn't believe it. He said, "After a day or two, the NDP collapses." I said, "Kennedy, you've got to be kidding." That he could so boldly be so mendacious was beyond me.

Interjections.

Mr Marchese: It's the Liberal government—

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: You have to define what it means for me before you—

The Acting Speaker: I don't have to define anything. You'll just withdraw.

Mr Marchese: Withdraw which word, Speaker?

The Acting Speaker: "Mendacious."

Mr Marchese: I withdraw that word. Ooh, I get by with a little help from my friends.

So you had Kennedy on TVO saying the NDP collapses when it comes to back-to-work legislation. The Liberals, when they spoke to you the other day, were the ones who were saying, "We want you to negotiate fairly." They're the ones who said yesterday, "We have an amendment." They didn't have an amendment; they had a bill that gets you back to work. They're the ones who, as soon as back-to-work legislation gets into this assembly, kick you out as quickly as they can. You just don't know it. But that's the politics, and you know it, of what happens in this place. Liberals are not there for you. They are there for you when they talk to you privately outside, in the classroom, wherever they are, but in this place they support back-to-work legislation. You just need to know that.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: David denies it. But please, for those of you who accept the denial of David Caplan, send me a message, a little note saying, "Give us the speeches of past bills that we dealt with," when we were dealing with the garbage strikers, when we were dealing with Catholic teachers in Simcoe. You know where they were? They were ready to kick you in the teeth as fast as the Tories were.

Just today we received a press release from OECTA, which says, "OECTA seeks voluntary arbitration" to end the lockout:

"Toronto's Catholic elementary students may be back in school as early as tomorrow if the board agrees to voluntary arbitration this afternoon, says Kathy McVean, president of the Ontario English Catholic Teachers Association." OECTA is seeking agreement from the Toronto Catholic District School Board to begin "voluntary arbitration as defined under the Ontario Labour Relations Act. This would trigger an immediate end to the lockout of teachers and students in Toronto's Catholic elementary schools...."

"The board's agreement to accept voluntary arbitration would also make any government intervention in the current impasse unnecessary...."

"While OECTA is opposed to arbitration in all but the most difficult of negotiations, McVean says voluntary arbitration is preferable to the form of mandatory arbitration imposed by legislation. 'With voluntary arbitration, the arbitrator is mutually agreed upon by both parties, and the terms of arbitration are not directed by government regulation.'"

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We support this kind of an arrangement where unions and boards try to settle their differences. OECTA, the union, said, "We submit to voluntary arbitration. We're asking the board to do the same." If they do that, they say the teachers will be back. They're saying that voluntary arbitration means that there would be an agreed-upon arbitrator, which is critical because in the past the Tories, no less the Liberals, would be happy to have an arbitrator that would make a ruling. But if an arbitrator is picked by the Conservative government, and not agreed upon by you, you're never going to know what the result is.

Voluntary arbitration means the union and the board have to agree on the arbitrator. That's better than forcing them back to work. It's better than the odious Bill 28. It's better than the odious Liberal Bill 61 that would force teachers back to work.

We are happy, as New Democrats, to make sure this debate happens in this Legislature. We would not force the teachers back. We believe they need time, both the board and the teachers, to settle their differences. The Catholic board did not give them that time, and this government did not give them any time at all to negotiate because they had a bill ready to go. The Liberals have a bill ready to go too, if you'll permit it.

New Democrats believe there should indeed be peace restored with our teachers, but we're not going to get it with the kind of bill that Dalton McGuinty introduced in 1992, which would end strikes. Some of you don't know it, but I have Bill 14 in my hands, where Dalton McGuinty would have ended strikes for teachers. This Conservative government has conveniently taken on that bill and said, "We're going to abolish strikes as well." Why? To put the Liberals on the spot, to put the leader, Dalton McGuinty, on the spot, to say to say to Dalton, "You had a bill in 1992 that would end strikes. What do you say now?" It's to wedge him against a hard place.

We think Dalton McGuinty's bill in 1992 was wrong and we think the Tory initiative to end strikes for teachers is wrong, too, because it will not restore peace. Peace is restored by a peaceful government not waging war against teachers. It is not restored by ending the right to strike.

New Democrats would respect that right, and we would bring money to the educational system by taxing individuals who earn over \$100,000, \$150,000 and whatever. Some of you don't like it, but they have been the biggest beneficiaries of the Tory tax cuts. We say we would put \$1.5 billion into our beleaguered educational system immediately to help them out. Neither the Liberals nor the Tories can do it with existing dollars. They're bankrupt, and so are the Liberals.

I am sorry. If the Liberals get elected, you won't get the help you need to restore sanity and health to our educational system. If the Tories get re-elected, you're going to get the same level of pugilism you've gotten since 1995. Neither of these two parties can give you the peace, teachers, that you're looking for, except through New Democrats. We hope Catholic teachers will do the right thing when the election comes.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton Centre): It is always a pleasurable to listen to our honourable colleague from Toronto. If nothing else, he and his party are extremely consistent, and I compliment him on that particular perspective. I disagree with some elements, of course, of his speech. He very conveniently forgets the dictatorial social contract that his government passed, by order in council I believe, back in 1992, which severely encroached upon the bargaining rights of all public service workers, but particularly teachers.

It's interesting also that the tax he proposes would clearly indicate that most principals in the system would be paying the tax that he proposes to people earning over \$100,000.

Mr Caplan: I agree with the member on one particular point. I would say to the people of Ontario, how do you like your crisis in education so far? You were promised by the then-minister, John Snobelen, by Mike Harris and by his Minister of Finance Ernie Eves that they would create a crisis in Ontario schools, and they've done just that. Year after year after long year our kids have had over 25 million lost days to learning: work-to-rule, strike—attacks on the teaching profession—and it must end. We have to change.

The government of the day is telling you, "We have a cure for the crisis that we've created." The true cure is to change the government, is a change in the approach that we take toward education. We just cannot continue in this direction.

I've been reading the Ontario Legislative Assembly first session, 36th Parliament debates, 1997, from October and November, the time when the infamous Bill 160 was introduced into this House. Many of the predictions that members on this side of the House made about what was going to happen as a result are in fact coming to pass. What Mike Harris, Ernie Eves, John Snobelen, Dave Johnson, Liz Witmer and many others said would never happen, we are seeing the manifestation of today, and it will go on and it will continue.

Just one other comment to my friend from Trinity-Spadina. Many of the things he says are quite political. I would say this: there has only ever been one party that has suspended collective bargaining, that has suspended the right to strike, that has stripped contracts. That was the New Democratic Party when they were in government, under their social contract, supported, by the way, by Mike Harris, by the members opposite. The Liberal Party is the only consistent one in this House.

Mr Martin: It is always a pleasure to speak after my eloquent and articulate friend from Trinity-Spadina. He makes a case today, as he always does, that is airtight: that this is not about good labour relations, trying to resolve a conflict between two parties negotiating a return on investment of their effort, their work, their professional commitment to the job they do; it's more a case of political expediency.

We are on the eve of an election, whenever the government has the courage to call it, that is obviously going to play out in a manner not dissimilar from the previous two elections that this Conservative Party has taken us into where they poll the province to find out who the general populace is upset with or angry with or can build up a bit of a mad against if they're given the appropriate stimulus, and then you target them. In this instance, it's the teachers.

Over and over again, we have seen this government target groups of people. In most cases, they're very vulnerable and at-risk people who simply want to either work for a living and get duly rewarded or put bread on

the table for their children and themselves. They put them into a big bag, they shake them up, they turn them into criminals, they roll them out, and then people are asked to vote accordingly. They put out policies that will damage, hurt and diminish those folks even further. There are some out there in the general populace who think that this perhaps is a good idea and they support that kind of agenda going into an election. I find it unfortunate, because it really isn't in keeping, in my view, with how Ontario has grown over the last number of years, how we govern and how we resolve labour issues in this province.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments? Response, the member for Trinity-Spadina.

Mr Marchese: I remind the citizens watching that if Tories could cut so much from our essential services in good economic times, what will they do, what would they have done in bad economic times?

The same question applies to the Liberals. The Liberals, under Monsieur Chrétien, hated deficits, although when they were in opposition I don't know what they said. When they got into government at the federal level, man, did they devastate unemployment insurance, by 40%. They made up their deficit by cutting back on unemployment insurance: 40% of deficit reduction was due to the cuts they made to unemployment insurance.

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): On the backs of workers.

Mr Marchese: On the backs of workers—these are the Liberals for you, federally, and they would do it provincially.

They make reference to the social contract. They could do that, and they'll do that forever.

1650

You now have a Tory legacy to think about. They have a big legacy. They have a Hydro legacy, where \$1.5 billion is being passed on to our children. Remember that, the deficit, and what we're passing on to our kids? Now they've got a Hydro deficit, \$1.5 billion today, passing it on to my kids and your kids, and they say, "That's OK."

Bill 28 is odious because it's back-to-work legislation. Bill 61, the Liberal bill, is odious because it's back-to-work legislation. We urge the government to withdraw both bills, although the government bill is what matters. Why? Because OECTA has submitted to voluntary arbitration and we are assuming the Catholic board will do the same. We are assuming the deputy House leader and the other ministers who are here are going to say, "This is a good thing. Our bills are not necessary." We hope both parties will do that and allow you to negotiate openly, as you are entitled to do.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Hon Mrs Witmer: It's my pleasure to join in the debate about the government's Back to School (Toronto Catholic Elementary) and Education and Provincial Schools Negotiations Amendment Act. I would just begin my remarks by saying it has always been our first

desire that the two sides would negotiate and be able to put the students first and reach a fair agreement. It continues to be our hope that that indeed will happen.

Since that has not yet happened, I now want to encourage the two opposition parties—the Liberals and the NDP—to support us, support our bill and make sure we are putting the students first, and I hope you'll help us to pass this bill. In fact, you could give it unanimous consent today. We could end this strike and have the students back in the classroom tomorrow. However, we are seeing the two parties in opposition—the Liberals and the NDP—unfortunately stalling and preventing the 69,000 boys and girls in the board's care from participating in their regular classroom activities.

I think we have to pose some very fundamental questions that speak to the principles of education when we think about what is happening today and the fact that those students are not able to return to their classrooms. We all agree that students belong in the classroom, with a qualified teacher, in a safe and stable learning environment. I think we would all agree that most teachers want to be in the classroom. I have met many dedicated, hard-working teachers since becoming Minister of Education—and before—and I have to tell you, they work so hard on behalf of their students, to help those students achieve success. I know they want to be in the classroom.

We also have to remember that education is not about unions and boards, it's not about unions and government, it's not about boards and government; it is about our children. As a former teacher and a former trustee, I think sometimes we lose sight of what education is all about. Education is all about the student in the classroom. It's all about helping those young people achieve their maximum potential. It's all about helping them achieve success. If that's the case, if it is about our students, if it is about helping them achieve success and their maximum potential, the question then becomes a little bit different. I think we would all agree that students should have the opportunity to be in the classroom, should have the opportunity to achieve success and should have the opportunity to achieve their maximum potential.

Some of the outstanding questions that we are attempting to address in our bill are the following: do the members in this House agree that teachers should be able to complete report cards that include comments and grades? Do the members in this House believe that teachers should be able to administer the EQAO tests that help us to identify how well our students are doing? When we know how well they're doing, we can give them the appropriate support and remedial help if they need more support and assistance. Do the members in this House believe that teachers should have the opportunity to meet with parents at parent-teacher meetings to discuss the progress of their children? Do members in this House agree that maintaining co-operative education placements should be allowed to take place? If a student has decided that's going to be part of their educational experience, if that's going to be part of allowing them to move from school to job, do they believe that teachers

should be able to participate in that process? Finally, do the members of this House agree that teachers should be able to support, encourage and participate in graduation ceremonies in the schools throughout the province and particularly in the schools of the Catholic board?

These are the fundamental questions that the Liberals and NDP need to answer. They need to ask themselves which one of these concepts they do not support, do not think is important to the success of our students. They are all important. These are concepts that parents throughout this province feel are important and that I can tell you most of the teachers in the province feel are important.

Let's go back to what our government has attempted to do since 1995. In 1995, we made a commitment to provide quality education to our students. We promised to reform and improve Ontario's education system. We wanted to make sure that every student in this province, no matter where they lived, had access to equitable education. We wanted to make sure that the education system was more responsive to the needs of our students. Our students today in this province have diverse needs. We wanted to make sure that there was accountability, to parents, to teachers, to taxpayers. We have done all of that. We've made it more equitable, we've made it more responsive to student needs and we've made it more accountable.

We have always been committed to ensuring that all young people in Ontario receive a quality education and that they have the tools they need to achieve success. Indeed, we asked Dr Rozanski to take a look at the funding formula that we put in place as part of our reforms, because there were concerns that came to our attention that questioned the funding formula. So we said, "Let's hire an expert. Let's hire someone who has a knowledge of education, who is committed to the young people in this province."

Dr Rozanski travelled the province. He met with educational stakeholders and at the conclusion of his tour, his consultation, he came back and validated the funding formula. He told us that this is providing equal funding to the students in Ontario. He also told us that there is a need, over the next three years, to invest an additional \$1.8 billion. I can tell you, our government accepted every one of his recommendations. In fact, three days later, we had already announced \$610 million of the \$1.8 billion. We provided more money for salaries, for transportation and for special education. We responded, we listened and we acted.

1700

I have to tell you, if you take a look at the investments our government has made in the budget this year, we have committed \$1.1 billion more in the budget this year compared to last year. This is money that is going to enhance and protect the classroom services for our students. In fact, one of the unprecedented steps that our government took, in order to ensure that there would be stability in our classrooms, which we believe is so important to student learning and student success, was to invest almost \$700 million in teachers' salaries. On two

different occasions we added 3% to the salary benchmarks. We did this because we have been, this past year, building bridges with our educational stakeholders, looking to ensure that there is stability for our students, and that's why we provided the almost \$700 million for teachers' salaries. We wanted to make sure that every student in this province had access to a stable learning environment that would not be disrupted by labour disputes.

What else have we done? Since 1995, we have established a new curriculum, from kindergarten to the end of high school. It sets high standards for student achievement and excellence. We've introduced province-wide testing that reports regularly to teachers, students and parents. It lets us know how well our students are doing. But it also allows us to learn what type of support and assistance and programs our students need when they're not doing as well as they could be. As a result, we've been able to develop strategies that respond to the test results, such as the early reading strategy from grades 1 to 6 and the early math strategy, grades 1 to 6. These strategies are helping our students gain the fundamentals for success in future learning.

Just recently, we set up another task force, because we recognized that there were students who were at risk. That task force reported. I was very proud to move forward with the recommendations of the director of education from the Limestone board. They recommended that we introduce a GOALS strategy which would provide remedial assistance for students in grades 7 to 12. The strategy also included the introduction of a literacy course for students in grade 12 who have been identified as needing extra help in reading and writing. It will also provide a course in grade 9 to prepare students for the writing of the literacy test. We've also provided funding in order that students in grades 7 to 12 can get the remedial help that they need and deserve. In fact, I am very, very pleased to say that this strategy to help our students in grades 7 to 12 means that we have now invested an additional \$50 million to help our students achieve success.

We've also put in place a comprehensive program to support teaching excellence. It's important that our teachers remain up to date in their skills and their knowledge. It's important that they have the ability to apply these skills in the classroom and so, again, we are moving forward in that regard.

I'm very pleased to say that the reforms, the hard work of our teachers, our students and all those in education are paying dividends for our students. They are achieving success. Results from provincial, national and international tests continue to provide evidence that Ontario students are doing well. The 2001 Progress In International Reading Literacy Study shows that Ontario grade 4 students ranked fifth out of 36 jurisdictions around the world. In fact, they were ahead of the United States and Germany.

On the 2000 program for international assessment, Ontario's 15-year-olds ranked second among 32 jurisdictions in the world.

I'm proud to tell the House that yesterday, when the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, released the latest results of the school achievement indicators program writing assessment scores, our 13-year-old English-language students didn't come second, and they didn't come third. They ranked first in Canada.

Our reforms, our standards, are paying dividends. We need to thank our hard-working students, our teachers, our principals and our partners, our parents.

We are supporting our teachers. We recognize they are the backbone of the education system. Well-trained teachers instill in our students a love of learning, strong values and confidence. They provide our children with the solid educational grounding they need to become productive, contributing citizens. Our government will continue to support our teachers and teaching excellence, for we know this is critical to further student achievement.

If passed, this act will continue to support our teachers and students by ensuring a stable educational environment where our teachers can do what they do best, and that is teach our young people so our students can learn. It would ensure that the education of the children in the Toronto Catholic District School Board would not be further disrupted by a labour dispute that is keeping teachers away from the students in the classroom.

Teaching is a noble profession. When a person chooses to become a teacher, they are committing themselves to a higher calling. That is why passing this bill is so important. Not only will it benefit the 69,000 students; it will also send a message of stability. As such, the stability will create an environment where teacher recruitment can thrive and deal with the larger societal issue of attracting the best men and women to the prestigious and trusted position of teacher.

Our government is committed to working with our educational stakeholders to ensure that Ontario continues to attract well-qualified teachers in all subject areas, because we know that is critical to the success of our young people. This recruitment is best done in an environment of stability, where neither the students nor the front-line teachers are locked out or prevented from being in the classroom.

Our government has been working hard to ensure that we have the teachers we need. We've increased student spaces at Ontario's education faculties in the past five years; 6,000 new spaces have been created, a 24% increase over the previous five years.

So we continue to move forward. We continue to focus on attracting people to the math, science, technological studies and French areas, where we know the priorities are greatest. I'm pleased to tell you that as a result of our efforts, technological studies graduates are up more than 50% since 1999, science and French language graduates are both up more than 40% and math graduates are up over 20%. There are many young people

in this province who are responding to the call to enter the teaching profession.

We've also invested \$1 million toward initiatives to promote teaching as a professional career opportunity and to develop innovative programs for our new teachers. Together with our educational partners, we recently launched a very aggressive campaign called "Be The Spark," which is specifically geared to attracting university math and science students to teaching.

Our government is committed to our children. We are working hard to ensure that our children have the best teachers and that they are ready and able to teach.

We fully recognize the importance of teachers to our students and to our province. We thank the many dedicated, hard-working teachers in the province for going beyond the call of duty on many occasions.

1710

But we need to remain focused on making sure we have in this province a strong public school system that serves all our children. We are seeing improved achievement in the past seven years. We cannot now allow labour disruptions to take away from the gains we have made. It's important that we move forward. It is important that the opposition parties—the Liberals and the NDP—support this bill that we have in the House today. In fact, you could give your unanimous support. You could put the politics aside and you could put the kids first. We need to make sure that our teachers and our students are back in the classroom. We need to provide our students and our teachers with access to a safe and stable learning environment. We need to make sure that our students can continue to gain an excellent education.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell):

I'm proud to give my comments on the minister's speech. On May 21, the Liberal caucus met to discuss the proposed bill that the government was coming up with. All the members of the Liberal caucus were ready to support the back-to-school legislation, Bill 28, until we got into the House and found out that the government was coming up with 54 amendments to the Education Act.

We do believe in the education of our kids. The minister just mentioned that Ontario students are doing well. Why are we trying to destroy what we have done up to now? We have good teachers and good students, but we're trying to spoil what has been done for so many years.

Yes, we believe in teachers being involved in school activities. They have always been involved in after-school activities, no matter if it is sports, no matter if it is graduation. They are really proud to get involved in graduations, because they are proud of all the kids. But today we're trying to spoil whatever was done in the past.

The minister said many times that we are recognized as having a good school system in place. At the present time, I have a lot of respect for the minister, but she was forced to come up with Bill 28 because they want to pick up points during the election, which is coming up, and at

this point they haven't gained any points. This is why the election has been called off. The government is trying to get more points.

Ms Martel: I heard the Minister of Education say that education is all about the student in the classroom. I agree. The point I want to drive home today is, isn't it too bad that the Conservatives are not committed to those students?

What Rozanski demonstrated very clearly was that there have been huge cuts by this government to the education system that have left our system reeling in the last number of years. Tell me, how does it help students when so many schools have no libraries and no librarians? How does it help students when so many schools have no music teachers and no music programs? How does it help students when so many schools have no art programs? How does it help students when so many schools don't have full-time principals or full-time secretaries? How does it help students when so many schools don't have enough custodial staff to keep the schools clean and the property safe? How does it help students when we have a huge waiting list for special education in this province? How does it help students when they don't have enough textbooks in their classrooms? How does it help students when the Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services can't get out money for support for autistic students even though she announced that money last November? How does it help students like the one who was outside the grocery store I was at on Sunday night fundraising for her school, selling chocolate bars? How does it help students when they have to do that because of the cuts this government has made to education?

This government has a lot to answer for, because this government has cut over \$2 billion from our education system and made a sustained and concerted attack on teachers over the last eight years. How does it help students? This government is not committed to students.

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): I would like to remind the member across the way that I sold chocolate bars when I was 16 and in high school. Do you know how long ago that was? What I want is to do the right thing, the right thing for students.

There's a woman here, Mrs Rebecca Gordon, who has two children in the system. She spent the afternoon here because she's concerned about her children. That is what it's all about. Teaching is a profession. It's a professional profession.

What is working to rule? I can understand working to rule when you're fabricating cars, making furniture and that type of thing. But when you're dealing with human beings and you're a professional person, how can you sleep at night and say, "I'm going to work to rule. I'm going to work to rule because this is my right and I don't care what impact it has on a child who's going to spend seven or eight years at the elementary level"? What kind of profession would condone that? Can you explain that to me? I have an awful lot of difficulty understanding this.

What is wrong with a teacher completing report cards? After all, the parents do fund the school system; they do fund the teachers' wages and their benefits. I think they deserve the right to know how the student is performing and what the student is doing.

What is wrong with a teacher attending parent-teacher night so that the parents know exactly what is wrong and what remedial work the teacher or the school system could provide to the student to make sure the student will be functional in life?

Isn't that what it's all about: to do the right thing for the student? Isn't that what we want to do? So why don't you give us unanimous consent right now in this House?

Mr Caplan: I want to know what happened to the Liz Witmer who used to support public education in this province. I want to know what happened to people like Dianne Cunningham or David Young or Tina Molinari, people who used to support public education. I want to know what happened.

I think what happens is like out of an Anthony Burgess novel: they make these folks sit and watch these misleading advertising commercials over and over again, and then they spew it out here like it's the gospel truth come down from heaven itself.

Well, nobody's fooled. This is the result of eight long years of an attack on public education, and the government members now reap what they sow. Having found themselves in this position, they try to dig themselves out, they try to find some other way, but unfortunately they only get deeper and deeper, and it's our kids—my kids, the kids across this province—who are paying the price.

Remember the advertising campaign, the famous clock ad? "Our teachers aren't working hard enough," said Liz Witmer and John Snobelen and Mike Harris and Ernie Eves. "We have to teach them a lesson. We have to show them who's in control."

1720

Well, welcome to your crisis in education. You can pass whatever legislation you want. Until we have a change in the approach that we take in this province, until we have real and lasting change, it is not going to matter one bit what you put in a piece of legislation, because you have the same underlying attack on public education which began in 1995 and continues to this very day. That change has to happen. I can't wait for the opportunity for the people of the province to pass judgment—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

Mr Caplan: —on Liz Witmer, Mike Harris—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.
Response?

Hon Mrs Witmer: I appreciate those on both sides of the House who gave their response.

I want to come back to what I said at the start. Education shouldn't be about politics. It's not about government and unions and trustees. It's about students.

I'd just like to conclude by saying that there are more students in this province than ever before who have special needs. As a result, our government has moved

forward in a way that the funding that now flows to school boards is enveloped. It is protected. It goes exclusively to help those students with special needs. We will continue to provide the funding that is required. We're now providing about \$1.6 billion. I would remind people as well that it was our government that actually was the first government in the history of this province to identify that there was a need to give special support to special-needs students. I know, because I was a trustee on the board when it became the reality. But we were also the first government to envelope the funding and make sure that it flowed there.

What we have been doing for seven years is making sure that we do everything we can to help our students achieve success. We have a new curriculum. We have new standards. We are providing support to our teachers.

If any further proof is needed as to the initiatives that we have undertaken and our commitment to helping our students achieve success, I want to read to you the headline from the Toronto Star today: "Ontario 13-Year-Olds Tops in Reading Test ... New Curriculum Given Credit for the Difference."

Ladies and gentlemen, congratulations—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order. Further debate?

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough-Rouge River): I stand today in addressing Bill 28. I also have the opportunity to speak after the minister. I want to say some kind words about the minister, because she's a person I do respect. She brought about a bit of calm to education when she assumed the role of Minister of Education.

I think I should make some general comments about this government and what they've done to education. As you know, in 1995, when they assumed government, one would say that hell seemed to have broken loose. I think at that time they had a Mr Johnson. By the time he was finished with education, the entire education environment was poisoned. The teachers were in turmoil. The education system was so confusing, the fact is we thought there was a war on, and it wasn't getting anywhere. Of course the revolution, this Common Sense Revolution that Mike Harris had brought about, tells someone, "We're going to target. We're going to pick winners and losers." In that sense, I think the teachers got the brunt of it all. Who suffered in the process? The students. The education system has never been the same since.

Then comes, to think they would have a solution to all this, Mr Create-a-Crisis-in-Order-to-Solve-Anything, John Snobelen. He came in and, my golly, you can see what happened in that time. "To create a crisis," he said, "is the only way to solve anything." By the time he was out too, the place was worse off. That's number two.

Number three came around: Janet Ecker, this nonsense, take-no-hostages minister. She came in and she was tough as nails. She was going to go about and straighten this system out. But, funnily enough, under all of that hardness she supported public education. I don't

know what happened along the way, but she changed somehow. As you can remember, Mr Speaker, when she wrote a letter to the United Nations defending public education, I put her down as a defender of public education. But all of a sudden the government turned around and changed all of that and started to fund private schools, to almost water down what public education is all about in Ontario. The place was in a mess. Here we had three ministers who had a frontal attack on education. The teachers were abused, and I'll come to that later on. I know the kind of work teachers have done in the classroom and how students have responded to those teachers.

Then came Mrs Witmer, who brought about a calmness—a kinder, gentler individual who said that we cannot operate in this turmoil and fighting that's going on in the education system. Somehow she caught my attention, and I said that now we were going to get somewhere. Teachers are going to get some respect and students, at last, would then work in an environment where they would be able to learn in safety, in an environment where they could interact, in an environment where they could stimulate their minds and not have Queen's Park and the Legislature biting at them.

Last September, when the Toronto Catholic District School Board had been negotiating their contract, nothing was done. Then, at long last, come May 15 or somewhere around there, eight days into negotiations, I presume, they were at work and students were in the classroom, having their lessons taught to them. Of course, regardless of what they wanted to say out there, you know the teachers were marking papers and making report cards. But the way the government has laid this new legislation down is to say that they weren't doing that; they were going to refuse to do that. That wasn't the case at all. I think people should know that that was not the case. None of the teachers had refused to do all that, but they locked them out. The board decided, after eight days of talking, to lock them out, and then they said the teachers were on strike. They weren't on strike; they were locked out.

Funnily enough, a coincidental situation happened. By mere coincidence the government launched its platform. They launched their political platform to go into an election talking about the fact that they were going to end all strikes by teachers.

Interjection.

Mr Curling: The fact is, although Mr Baird will heckle, they were not focusing rightly that they themselves, touting all this campaign literature at a time when teachers and students need interaction, launched a political game to lock 69,000 students out—not the teachers; they locked out the students. The teachers were willing to work and that didn't happen.

I heard all the members over there talking about putting students first. If the government were serious about putting students first, they would not have locked out 69,000 students, and that's what they did. They

locked the students out, and then said that they locked the teachers out.

Who here is putting students first? Not the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario. As soon as students get a good grade, I'll see the minister waving the fact that, "Look at what we have done. We have students who are coming first," and yet they've locked 69,000 students out. They say they put students first. If they were putting students first, why would they have taken \$2.1 billion out of the education system? It affects students. But of course they're all honourable people, and they lock students out. As a matter of fact, with all the negotiation they feel they have no right at all in a democratic society to strike. Yet in the legislation they do have the right to do that.

1730

I think that the people of Ontario, the students, were cheated out of good democracy and good management. What they have done here is decide to bring education back into the seats of the Conservative Party, to manage it right here, and they're doing a terrible job. You can see that with the number of ministers they had who did just an awful job in education. Leave education to the school boards, leave education to the teachers—leave it there. They'll do a much better job.

Of course, they are the government and they have a right to bring in whatever legislation they want, and Dalton McGuinty and my good House leader have been trying very hard to get people together so we can continue to put students first, back into the classroom, and to have teachers there; in other words, talking to people, getting together so this can happen.

Ernie Eves and the minister did not take up the phone one time to say, "Let's sit down and talk about it." It wouldn't fit their political agenda and their platform that they will deny people their democratic right to strike, and they said, "We will do that."

We on this side, Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals, agreed they should be back in the classroom. So we decided we would support a bill to get those students and teachers from the Toronto Catholic school board back. What have they done? Sneakily, in a deceiving way, what they've done is sneak this in—

Hon Mr Baird: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would ask your ruling on the word "deceiving."

The Acting Speaker: The member might—

Mr Curling: Let me try other wording. They have changed the words. They have changed the direction altogether, when we had agreed to put the teachers back into the classroom with the kind of legislation that only called for that for the Toronto Catholic District School Board. But they sneaked it in to do the entire province and then to put other things in it, so that with one sweep they would do this legislation.

To find words other than "deceiving"—the fact is that they did not do what they should have done. We can't support that; we will not support that. But we don't sit idly saying we would not support that. We put forward a bill. We gave you a real bill, a clean bill, a bill that does not play games or support your political agenda for your

campaign, hoping to get some points in the campaign in the coming election—a clean bill so we could focus on students first, not on the campaign of Ernie Eves, which is not going anywhere, down the road of destruction.

The Road Ahead that they have is a road where they would like to wipe out all those who are in their way. As a matter of fact, I don't think they like students. I think they just like themselves. I think it's all about themselves governing. But in their hearts I know many of them are parents and many of them are former teachers, and of course they do a wonderful job when they are in that category. But as politicians it seems that somehow their political agenda changed in a dramatic way.

I want, in the short time, to also speak about teachers, and not just teachers in general but teachers in our society especially in Toronto, teachers I know of in the Catholic school system, teachers I have visited, like at Prince of Peace Catholic School in my riding, St Bede Catholic School, St Ignatius Catholic school, which I have visited every Friday for the last 15 years or more, to see what's happening, to interact with them, to understand some of the challenges they have. What I see there are teachers who are so dedicated, interacting with classrooms that are oversized; teachers who because of lack of funding from this government are buying things out of their own pockets, to make sure the students themselves get a proper education; teachers who are interacting with people who speak 25 or 30 different languages in the classroom; teachers who are doing social work; teachers who are staying back in the evenings; teachers who are doing extracurricular activities; teachers who are in the dining room, monitoring kids at lunchtime; teachers out in the yard supervising; teachers doing things beyond the classroom, which we call extracurricular activities. They're doing that without being legislated. They're doing it out of the goodness of their hearts and out of goodwill.

Even Ernie Eves admitted that. He said, "If we ever try to legislate goodwill, it won't work; to legislate love won't work." But when they see the opportunity of an election coming and find things not going their way, maybe they could legislate goodwill, maybe they could legislate love. But it's not going to work because those teachers—whom I've seen in my 18 years in this Parliament, visiting them quite regularly on Fridays—are people who are completely engaged in enriching those wonderful and beautiful minds, enriching the minds of the individuals who the Minister of Education talked about coming first. In spite of the lack of funding and the cuts in funding to education, in spite of all the bullying that went on with these ministers, in spite of the way they're trying to take away a democratic right, in spite of all that, the teachers are there each day. And the principals too are part of it all. We must not forget them. I'd like many of you folks to go to those schools, where principals are leaving their schools sometimes at 9 o'clock and 10 o'clock at night, working from 8 o'clock in the morning almost every day, and this government would see fit to legislate them.

We have tried our best to say, "Let's put pure legislation in to get them back talking." If they supported the bill put forward by Gerard Kennedy of the Liberal Party, I would say to you that those students and teachers would be back in class by Friday. Today being Wednesday, they would be back in the classroom in a day or two. But no, this government is adamant in trying to win the next election at all costs. It's not working at all. As a matter of fact—I don't know if you know, Mr Speaker—they say the Catholic school board and the Toronto Catholic elementary students could be back in school as early as tomorrow, because they are saying, "We are prepared to go back and talk." I will read a media release that came out: "'Toronto's Catholic elementary students may be back in school as early as tomorrow if the board agrees to voluntary arbitration this afternoon,' says Cathy McVean, president of the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association."

The fact is that these people see students first, but not this government. They see power first. They will do everything in their power to form the next government. But this province and the people and parents around here have seen through this government—this government that has had those students locked out for all this time, this government that has parents going to work wondering where their children are when they could be in the classroom. But what has happened? This government is insisting on their political agenda and has decided to keep them out to make sure they can get some points in this regard.

1740

It is unfortunate. The headlines are showing, and I tend not to believe it, "We have to postpone this election because we're not good in the polls yet. We're waiting to work on that." But I will tell them, as the people see more of this Progressive Conservative government, their platform and what they are doing, they will be just like Kim Campbell: they will be out and have maybe two seats over there. They'll see through you all. They will vote for true democracy. They'll vote for people who put students first.

Hon Mr Baird: Vote for true democracy.

Mr Curling: That's right. True democracy, as Mr Baird echoed over there, the things that Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals believe in. Transparency—we don't have to hide this kind of stuff, sneaking legislation in like they're trying to do here, to control unions and the boards. We believe in that kind of democracy. One minute they talk about this aspect of things and the next minute they don't believe in it. What they do and what they say are two different things.

In summary, let me say that it is unfortunate, on the eve of the time when students should be getting their grades, that this government continues to play politics. I hope the many teachers who want to put their students first are realizing this government is in the way. It did not start overnight. It started a long time ago. It started with all those ministers who were creating a crisis, who were

putting the screws to all the students and teachers in the past, and today they have reached a crossroad.

The Road Ahead, I'm telling you, for this government is a road that will put them out of power, a road that will replace them with a much better government that understands students and will put students first. I hope that they will come to their senses and support the bill the Liberal Party has put forward. It is a clean bill, a bill that is not in any way trying to hide any form of getting control of the education system, but trying to get the Toronto Catholic school board back to the table for any kind of negotiation and settlement.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments?

Ms Martel: I want to follow up on a press release that was partially read by the member from Scarborough-Rouge River because I think it points out why we shouldn't be dealing with the government bill, why we shouldn't be dealing with the Liberal bill, why we should be calling on the Catholic school board here in Toronto to actually deal with voluntary arbitration as a mechanism to get this resolved.

We have a press release that came out from OECTA this afternoon. The member read the first paragraph from it, and I want to deal with the rest of it. It says very clearly that OECTA is seeking agreement from the Toronto Catholic District School Board to begin voluntary arbitration as defined under the Ontario Labour Relations Act. This would trigger an immediate end to the lockout of teachers and students in Toronto's Catholic elementary schools.

"The board's agreement to accept voluntary arbitration would also make any government intervention in the current impasse unnecessary," McVean says.

While OECTA is opposed to arbitration in all but the most difficult of negotiations, McVean says voluntary arbitration is preferable to the form of mandatory arbitration imposed by legislation. "With voluntary arbitration, the arbitrator" will be "mutually agreed upon by both parties, and the terms of arbitration" will not be "directed by government" legislation.

I think this is a very good solution to the situation that we have at hand. I think that if the Catholic school board could be called upon, or have it impressed upon them, that they should be agreeing to this, then there wouldn't be a need for government legislation that we're dealing with here in the form of Bill 28, or the Liberal legislation that they are talking about here this afternoon. It seems to me that it is incumbent on the board to meet the union and deal with this in this satisfactory way.

Hon David Young (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I appreciate you providing me with this opportunity to respond to the comments made by the member from Scarborough-Rouge River. I listened intently to his remarks today and I must tell you they don't accord with things I've heard in my riding over the last little while.

I've had an opportunity to speak to many parents who have indicated to me that they want their children back in school. They have also indicated to me that they want to

ensure that when their children are back in school, their teachers will have an opportunity to do what the teachers do best, and that is teach. Of course, as part of their teaching responsibilities there should be comments on report cards, and he knows that well.

The member's comments intrigued me partly because he went so far as to say, and I hope I am quoting him accurately, "This government had these students locked out." What a remarkable thing to say. How fanciful. The board of education, a duly elected body, had the teachers locked out because they were not performing what that board believed were essential services. But what's even more to the point—and I'd ask you, if you would, to pay attention to the next comment because it's particularly important—is that the chair of the board that locked out the teachers is the vice-president of a Liberal riding association. So the allegation from the opposition, fanciful as it is, is that somehow or another this gentleman, who is an executive member of a Liberal riding association, is conspiring with the government. That's ridiculous. Mr Speaker, you know that's ridiculous. You know that not only is the chair of the board the vice-president of a Liberal riding association, another trustee on the board is the son of—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Questions or comments?

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): The Ontario Liberal Party does not support the lockout, does not support Mr Carnevale, does not support any board member who supported the lockout. The only thing you didn't answer is, do you support the lockout? If you don't support it, why don't you do the right thing? You were afraid to answer the question. Do you support the lockout? You want the lockout because you want this to be about part II of the bill. I say to the government—

Interjections.

Mr Duncan: They are all exercised now.

My colleague from Scarborough is absolutely correct. "Take the clause out of the bill, put it into your campaign platform and let's go out and let's have an election on that part." I don't agree with you. I believe that teachers should have the right to strike. This party believes in free and collective bargaining.

Let me tell you something else. We believe in reasonable restrictions on that, as does the current Minister of Education. At least that's what she used to believe. That's what the Premier used to believe, but he flipped and he flopped. Why? Because they're desperate.

I don't buy this stuff that they didn't call the election because of SARS. They didn't call the election because they know they're going to go down if they call the election, and because they're afraid to face a party that has a clear and consistent message of change, change that people in this province can trust.

So I say to the member for Willowdale, Mr Young, do you support the lockout? You didn't answer that question. You have the power to put those kids back to school today. Do it instead of playing games, and they're playing games with these children. I agree with my

colleague opposite. OECTA has now talked about voluntary arbitration, and I say to Mr Carnevale and any other Liberal who supports this lockout, give it up and get the kids back to school.

Mr Martin: I think we now have the Liberals' position on this, which is the right to strike with reasonable restrictions. I'm not quite sure what that means.

Anyway, this is no more than political grandstanding by both the Tories and the Liberals in front of a very difficult labour relations situation that we've all faced at one point or another as government in this place and—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Windsor-St Clair will withdraw that.

Mr Duncan: I withdraw that for the moment.

The Acting Speaker: You will withdraw.

Mr Duncan: I withdraw.

Mr Martin: I didn't hear what the member from Windsor said, but nevertheless—

Interjection: You can get your time back, Tony.

1750

Mr Martin: No, it's OK. Well, the right to strike with reasonable restrictions—we'll hear more about that, I'm sure, over the next few days here as that position is rolled out.

This is no more than political grandstanding by a government that intends to run this election again on the backs of some targeted groups of people in the province that it has decided are vulnerable and that the public will support it in. I find it regrettable. It's not the politics of hope and renewal, which this province needs at the moment. It's not the politics of community and working together to better the lot of everybody. It's the politics of division, of divide and blame. I don't think it serves us well. It hasn't served us well over the last eight years and won't be what will give us the potential that we need to take our place in the world out there, with everybody on board looking after those who are vulnerable and at risk.

Teachers—my God, I've got four kids in the system. I know teachers who are there at 7 o'clock every morning preparing for class. I know teachers who work overtime till 10 or 11 o'clock at night coaching teams, looking after children. I don't understand this targeting of teachers. I don't think it's going to—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Response?

Mr Curling: I don't want to get into who to blame, and who at one time didn't support the social contract or supported the social contract and things like that. I don't want to get into that at all. Neither do I want at all to get into, "We didn't really lock them out with any locks but we support the fact that they should lock them out and we support the fact that we are going to have legislation to do so."

Let's go back to what they all say, "We put students first," meaning we're going to have legislation to have this kind of a poisoned environment. Then when the students get back there's a poisoned environment. This government, the Conservative government, has poisoned the education environment all along with their five

ministers who have created crises and run roughshod over students and teachers for the last eight years. They are the ones that don't put students first. We, as I said, believe that of course students belong inside the classroom and at school, but not under the environment you are creating.

I know the good member from Scarborough Centre, Ms Mushinski, believes that. She believes that the environment is poisoned today. What we're trying to do is make a clean environment, the bill that the Liberal Party has put forward.

Put aside all those bills. Here is what the Toronto school board is saying now, "Let's get the voluntary arbitration. Let's get all these redundant bills that are going around. Let's get the students back in the classroom." I then ask them, why don't you pick the phone up and say to them, "Yes, I think this is a wonderful idea. I think you all should be back there talking." That's what we're all about. That's what we're about. Let us do that. Let's put students first. We, as the Liberals, put students first.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Spina: It's interesting to listen to the political haranguing that goes on in here. I think almost every politician, every critic, in every comment that's been made over the past few years, few months, few days, has zeroed in on a common statement that says, "Well, we just want to do it for the kids and put students first." The interesting thing is that very few of these people have the credibility that the teachers claim should be there. When I hear comments from the member from Trinity-Spadina, I have some confidence in that member's comments because he has been a teacher. I would have confidence in the member for Sudbury's comments, if he spoke on this issue. He has been a teacher. The Minister of Education has been a teacher.

Interjection: And a trustee.

Mr Spina: And a trustee. I myself was in a classroom for 12 years. My wife has had a 29-year career as a public high school teacher.

Mr Duncan: If she married you, I'll have to question her judgment.

Mr Spina: Well, at least I'm still married to her.

In any case, what I'm saying is that the people who have been involved in the education system, whether they agree or disagree, at least have been in the classroom. They've had to walk the talk. They've had to be there with the children, from the little ones with the sniffing noses to the bigger ones who have other problems in the high school system.

I'm very pleased that, for example, this morning, I spent two and a half hours at Heart Lake Secondary with the former Canadian heavyweight boxing champion George Chuvalo. We spoke at Heart Lake Secondary School, two blocks from my house. I have to say that we had 600 grade 9 students in the auditorium—well, cafeteria actually. We had to clear out of there because it was lunchtime at 10:30—first lunch. Big school.

In any case, we were very pleased that Principal Moreash was very receptive to have George Chuvalo come into the school and talk to kids about drugs. We were told from the people from the crime commission that on this particular visit he received the longest ovation of any school that Mr Chuvalo has visited in this province. I'm very proud of that because the kids from Heart Lake Secondary are good students. It was interesting that, when I asked them if they knew where I lived, many hands shot up. Some people thought that was a threat. For me it was not. These are good students, they're good kids and they come from good families. This is an event that might have been deemed to be extra-curricular. But I don't think it was. I think it was a necessary element of being part of the school environment where we learn about life, we learn about problems and we learn about social issues and how to protect ourselves and keep them away from it.

We have to emphasize that we're talking about back-to-school legislation, that the act that will put the kids back in the classroom, where they do belong. I have

heard often, during the 1995 campaign, during Bill 160 arguments, during the 1999 campaign, and since then—I have a large number of personal friends who are teachers, and we have been friends for many years. We all went through university together. There are 10 of them in my personal social group who are teachers. We are also personal friends with our neighbours and my wife's friends from their high school that are, of course, teachers and spouses. We've socialized with them for a long time, for many years. We've had political discussions. Yes, you're never going to get complete agreement on every issue, but I will say—

Mr Caplan: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Do we have quorum present?

Deputy Clerk (Ms Deborah Deller): Quorum is present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Quorum is present, but this may be a good opportunity to say, it being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 10 of the clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1759.

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Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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Fourth Session, 37th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
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**Official Report
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(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 29 May 2003

Jeudi 29 mai 2003

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 29 May 2003

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 29 mai 2003

*The House met at 1000.
Prayers.*

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

MOTOR VEHICLE MANUFACTURER'S WARRANTY ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003

SUR LA GARANTIE DES FABRICANTS DE VÉHICULES AUTOMOBILES

Mr Sampson moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 40, An Act respecting warranties offered by manufacturers of motor vehicles / Projet de loi 40, Loi concernant les garanties offertes par les fabricants de véhicules automobiles.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): The member has up to 10 minutes for his presentation.

Mr Rob Sampson (Mississauga Centre): This bill before us will represent, if passed by this House and carried to third reading, the first lemon law in all the provinces of Canada. I believe it's a major step forward for consumers, not only in this province but, if other provinces choose to pick up on this lead, perhaps across the country.

I want to start off by saying two things. The first is that by bringing this bill forward and debating it today, and hopefully moving it through the Legislature to a conclusion, it's not the intent to imply that, as it relates to vehicles or any consumer good in this country or province, we are not producing in this country and North America good quality vehicles. I believe we are. I believe the auto manufacturers take their time and effort to try to produce a good vehicle, and auto workers work hard to try to do that as the vehicles come off the line.

But the reality is that every once in a while, something does come off the line that just doesn't quite do it—a defect either in design or manufacture, or both. It ends up in the hands of consumers. Frankly, when it ends up in the hands of consumers, it's an extremely frustrating situation that is not being dealt with by the current law; and while the manufacturers themselves have their own arbitration program that I'll speak to in a few moments, it's really not being dealt with completely by that particular plan.

I've done a lot research on this issue—an issue, by the way, prompted by a discussion I had with a constituent at one time in my office. So I say to the constituents watching: these conversations you have with your local members do help, and they do, perhaps, every once in a while end up on the floor of the Legislature.

This bill before us is actually modelled after a number of pieces of legislation in the US—California and Wisconsin. When I did my research I came across a court decision around a Wisconsin lemon law. The decision was rendered in 1996 around a vehicle that was purchased in 1990. That vehicle had a number of transmission defects that on seven occasions couldn't be dealt with by the dealer.

There's a section of the decision that I'd like to read, because I think it says a lot about the frustration that people deal with when they have vehicles that can't be handled by the warranties. Whether it's the dealer's frustration with the manufacturer, or the manufacturer is not able to communicate to the dealer, whatever happens it ends up, unfortunately, in the lap of the poor consumer who has paid a tremendous amount of money.

The judge says, "We realize that car manufacturers do not deliberately set out to manufacture a lemon," and I think he's right. "Quite the opposite," he says. "In fact, it's in their own best interests not to do so." He goes on to say that it is in their own best interests to make sure a lemon doesn't slip through. In fact, they have many procedures on the line that work to make sure that lemons don't slip through. He says, "It's one of the facts of modern-day life that it does happen every once in a while, and it's a cost to the unlucky consumer who purchases that lemon as far as the cost of the car is concerned. They have things like interrupted use of the service, delays in using the vehicle, even cancelled schedules, the time and trouble as well as the anxiety and stress that accompany those changes and the apprehensions that result every time the consumer gets back into the automobile wondering what's next.

I have a lot of that, not personally but through correspondence I have received since I tabled this bill in the last session. I am actually surprised at the extent to which people have found out about this bill, e-mailed me, called me, written me, communicated with me in some way about the problems they've had with their vehicles. This is just a small sample of it.

I won't mention any names but I'll try to do some experiences here: things like somebody with a Subaru that didn't get fixed the third time the transmission

started to be defective and the only recourse was to sell the car, as the warranty had expired and nothing had been done.

Here's another one: "Seven trips to the dealership who simply told me, 'We cannot repair the vehicle after the warranty has expired.'"

Here's another one: this particular fellow is a lawyer who acted on behalf of somebody who actually did get a settlement. It was another vehicle, a Volvo, that was a lemon. She was awarded \$20,580 in the damages, but the cost to get that far was \$60,000.

My research indicated that there needs to be another vehicle to allow consumers to be able to get another avenue of recourse against the manufacturers of the vehicles.

I should say that dealers are working very hard on behalf of consumers to try to solve the problem, because they want to see that consumer come back and buy another car from them. Each consumer who comes in the door and buys a car is another consumer for the next purchase, and they do their best to try to deal with the vehicle and the vehicle's problems.

Vehicle manufacturers themselves have set up something called the Canadian Motor Vehicle Arbitration Plan. That was set up, I think, in 1994 and it allows purchasers of vehicles to petition this group to have their problem with the manufacturer arbitrated. I think this is a good initiative. It's not well advertised, and I've spoken to the people at CAMVAP, who acknowledged that perhaps their plan is not as aggressively communicated and marketed as it should be. I think they're taking some steps to do that. They have a Web site, www.CAMVAP.ca, for those who are viewing today.

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But the problem with this, of course, is that under the terms and conditions of using CAMVAP, if you decide to go to arbitration and have CAMVAP decide the issue around your vehicle, you can't subsequently sue; or if you sue the company and the manufacturer feels that you didn't get recourse, you are not entitled to use CAMVAP. So it's a bit of "this way or the highway," if you will.

This particular bill I have before the House will allow consumers that additional option to be able to find some resolution to their matter as it relates to an automobile they've purchased from a manufacturer here in Ontario. It simply says this: if a major defect has been identified within the warranty period that was there when the purchaser purchased the vehicle, and after three times the manufacturer can't fix that vehicle, the consumer has the option to pick: "Get me a new car, replace the car or give me my money back." It's very simply that.

The difference between that and perhaps the CAMVAP approach or any other action to tort or to go to court through other laws is that it's the consumer who gets to pick the resolution of the matter. It's an additional tool in their basket of tools to help them deal with the frustration, concern and costs they've absorbed as a result of purchasing a vehicle—a tremendous amount of money is now being spent in after-tax personal income on these

acquisitions—to give them a tool to be able to go back to the manufacturers themselves or to the dealer who may represent them, and say, "Look, I spent a lot of money on this. It's not working out. It's a safety defect. It's serious. It has been recurring. You solve my problem." The two choices for solving the problem really are in the hands of the consumer.

I think that for many consumers viewing, and certainly those who have written to me, if you peel back all these concerns and problems they've had, their issue is that they feel as though they're not in the driver's seat, if you will, as it relates to the resolution of their matter. This bill would put them in the driver's seat. It would give them that extra legislative tool to be able to say, "I spent a lot of money on your vehicle, Mr Manufacturer. Now help me out."

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I'm pleased to join the debate and to say I will be supporting this bill, although I must say that my experiences with the automobiles I've happened to purchase have been pretty good. I drove my last automobile 330,000 kilometres with relatively little problem—a fine North American car, I might add—and that has been my experience with virtually every car I've had. I have a 1967 car that still runs very well. So I have not had the personal need for this sort of legislation.

I think if there's one area where we've seen tremendous improvement in the quality of the product, it has been in our auto sector over the last 20 years. I want to make that point to the member who is proposing this, to the public and to our auto industry. As I say, my experience has been exceptionally good. Frankly, this province is blessed. We have an enormous auto sector here, and one of the reasons for that is the quality of the workmanship we have.

I hope this bill doesn't imply that somehow or other the auto sector has special needs—because this deals just with auto. Frankly, there are some other sectors, such as the electronics sector and whatnot, that perhaps would benefit even more from a piece of legislation like this than the auto sector.

Having said all that, I do appreciate that the member has indicated he has a file of people who have had substantial problems with, I gather, their warranties. This piece of legislation is designed to fix that.

I have read this legislation. It was just two weeks ago that here in the Legislature we dealt with another private member's bill, designed to fix the problem of scoopers at the airport, where the business of our licensed limousine drivers—after paying insurance and getting the licence to pick up passengers at the airport—was being undermined by people operating illegally in picking up people out there. So we rushed that piece of legislation through here. We took it to a committee within a week, and we dealt with the legislation, but when we got to committee, the legislation changed dramatically. I guess the government said, "Listen, this private member's bill isn't workable," and we fundamentally changed the bill. That particular bill doesn't come into effect for six months after it's

proclaimed. We were told here in the Legislature two weeks ago, "We have an emergency. Our limousine drivers are going bankrupt. They are facing a crisis," and all three parties agreed to deal with the bill. We took it to committee and dealt with it in a matter of hours, only to find it's going to be at least Christmas before that legislation comes into effect.

The reason I raise that is, as I look at this piece of legislation, I realize it is the first lemon legislation in Canada, but I have some questions about how practical it is. I would hope that the member has at least had the input of the ministry staff to make absolutely certain that if we are going to take this forward, it is workable. The way I read the legislation—and the member, when he sums up at the end may be helpful here—if you take your vehicle in three times and they don't fix it, then the company must replace the vehicle. I had hoped that our warranty legislation was sufficiently good that you had the right, with any warranty in this province, to enforce it.

If what the member is saying is our legislation on enforcing warranties is unworkable and therefore we need a completely separate piece of legislation to deal with it—essentially, when you buy a warranty, it is supposed to be a legally binding contract, but what the member's bill is suggesting is that you can't enforce the warranty. If that is the case, then we've got a more fundamental problem, because all of us in this province have warranties on all sorts of things: any appliance, any electronic device, dare I say even the purchase of a new home. If what we're saying is that warranties in this province are legally unenforceable, but we're only dealing with automotive, then we're making a mistake.

I'll be supporting this piece of legislation with, I must say, some skepticism about its workability, having just two weeks ago dealt with another piece of private member's legislation—dare I say a few days before an election call—designed to solve an urgent problem only to find that the member who proposed that piece of legislation moved an amendment that made it not come into force until at least Christmas. I look forward to the member's explanation of why warranties in Ontario are unenforceable. In any event, I support the intent of the bill and look forward to discussion around it at committee.

1020

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): It's my pleasure to join in the debate today to support my colleague Rob Sampson with his private member's bill. I know he has brought forward similar bills in the past. The bill of course is the Motor Vehicle Manufacturer's Warranty Act.

I certainly believe that Mr Sampson has found a bill consumers will support, and it's a bill that's necessary. An automobile is a huge purchase for the average person, one of their two biggest purchases. A house would probably be the biggest purchase they make, and an automobile is about the second-largest purchase that the average Ontarian makes. I have two brothers who are in

the car business, actually. My brother Larry is the Ford dealer, Cavalcade Ford, in Bracebridge, and my other brother, Ross, is the Chrysler dealer, Muskoka Chrysler, in Bracebridge. I make sure I buy at least one Ford and one Chrysler. I have to admit that with my many years of buying Fords and Chryslers, I have never had a serious warranty problem. Of course in this current job I put about 55,000 kilometres a year on my Chrysler Sebring, driving around the beautiful riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka, and I haven't had a serious problem.

This new law, essentially a lemon law, protects consumers, because if you do have a major problem, a problem over \$1,000, or a safety problem and you take it back to the dealer for that same problem for three times—they try to fix the same major problem or safety problem three times—then the dealer has to offer you a new car or give you your money back. I think this makes sense. It actually often assists the dealers as well, because if they have a problem where the manufacturer won't stand behind it and deal with the problem, that gives them a tool to be able to assist the customer and get them a new vehicle and deal with that major problem.

This is going to be a good thing for the average consumer. I'd like to refer to some of the information about why lemon laws work around the world. For example, "While BBB Autoline does not operate in Canada, a number of Canadian BBB offices participate in the Canadian motor vehicle arbitration plan," which is CAMVAP, which is in many respects similar to the BBB Autoline program in the United States. "In 1998, CAMVAP processed almost 500 cases, of which over 300 were decided in arbitration. Despite the BBB's presence in every US state, every state still has a lemon law, with many dating back two decades." So obviously the States is a bit ahead of us in this area. "Hence, the fact that CAMVAP exists shouldn't be used against the Sampson bill since it would coexist easily with the voluntary CAMVAP" set-up, the arbitration process we have here at the current time.

I would like to support Mr Sampson in this private member's bill. I think it will bring needed protection for consumers in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): Mr Speaker, thank you. I was expecting somebody else to get up.

A couple of things: I want to say up front that as a member I support generally where you're trying to go with this particular legislation, Mr Sampson. I agree that it would give consumers—I wouldn't say a tool; it would give consumers the kind of power they need to get manufacturers and dealers to honour their warranties. I believe that if a manufacturer or a dealer knows that if they don't fix a serious defect in a car on three occasions the remedy is that they've got to give the person another car, I think there would be a fair amount of haste and attention paid to the complaint the consumer may have, to try to get the problem fixed.

I would imagine dealers and manufacturers will see this as a bit of a heavy-handed approach. I'm sure if I talk

to my good friends, like Urgel Gravel, Rick Chenier and others, and Mr Macioli and Bob Stewart and all the dealers up in the Timmins-Kapuskasing area, they probably would say to me, "This is a little bit heavy-handed."

I think we should at least allow this bill to go to committee. If it passes third reading—I think the jury is still out on that, but I'm prepared to give it passage at second reading under the condition that we can get this bill into committee. I don't think we have to have extensive hearings. I don't think we need to get hearings that last any more than a couple of days, but it's important that before we actually take a vote at third reading, I want to hear some of the consumer groups and the manufacturing and dealer groups come before us to talk about what this means.

I think there are a couple of pitfalls in what you're proposing. The concept is a good one, but there are a couple of pitfalls. What do you do if you have a consumer who tends to be more stringent on what they deem to be a problem? I'm trying to put that as tactfully as I can. For example, I was talking to one dealer in my riding—actually, I don't want to use the dealer's name; it wouldn't be fair. I happened to walk in there one day for something and there was a particular customer giving this guy a hard time. This dealer had done pretty well everything he could to fix the problem. I didn't say anything; I just took a look at the car as I was going out, and the scratch that was supposed to be there didn't exist. It was just something that somebody kept on saying, "It's there. I can see it." What do you do in those kinds of cases where there is just no satisfying the consumer? The dealer truly has done everything he or she can do and there's actually not a problem, but you've got a problem perceived by the consumer that hasn't been addressed and all of a sudden the person says, "Well, time to trade in my car. Give me a new one." We need to think about how we enshrine that into law.

There has to be protection for the consumer, to make sure the problem is fixed, but the law can't be just biased toward the consumer, because some dealers could get hurt by that. I, like you, agree there are a lot of good dealers out there, and often I find the problem isn't so much the dealer, it's the manufacturer. What the manufacturer says is, "Warranty work is paid at a lesser rate than your shop would get for doing work that's outside the warranty," and it's a bit of a problem for the dealer. Sometimes warranty work is not as lucrative as the regular service work they do within their service departments and sometimes the dealer ends up having to eat work being done on a car that has nothing to do with them. It wasn't them who designed the car, it wasn't them who built it, it wasn't them who created the defect. The manufacturer sometimes doesn't take the amount of responsibility that I think they should to fairly compensate the dealer for spending the time with the consumer who has the problem. So we need to deal with that.

I'm a little bit cautious in my support. I don't want to see this as something that's going to be really harmful to

dealers, because I think most dealers out there are doing the work. I just say, again, it's not a bad concept to say that.

Some of the issues I think we're going to have to deal with at committee—Mr Sampson has suggested there be a \$1,000 number. If you have a serious defect or something that's a safety concern and it costs at least \$1,000, if the dealer didn't deal with the problem on three occasions, you would be able to demand a new car. Is that a sufficient threshold? For example, with a new vehicle today, you can have a problem, let's say, with your power window system and it can cost more than 1,000 bucks to get this thing fixed, because of the components you have to put into the car. Nowadays, a lot of the components are much more expensive. In the way the cars are designed, it takes much more labour to take the old component out and put the new component in. Is \$1,000 a fair reflection of how this legislation would kick in?

The bigger question becomes, what kind of defects do you allow people to exchange cars on? For example, I wouldn't have a problem in saying, "I bought a brand new car and the transmission never worked right and they never fixed it." That's a major component, and there's an argument to be made that if the transmission hasn't been fixed on the third occasion, you would be given a new car. More than likely, that transmission is going to break after it's out of warranty and you could be faced with paying thousands of dollars to fix what is a very serious defect in the car. But what do you do on the \$1,000 number if it's something that is not as critical; for example, something to do with the air conditioning system? The air conditioning system could be more than 1,000 bucks to fix, and a person is going to get a brand new car versus a six-month-old car or a year-old car, depending on the warranty, because the air conditioner doesn't work? Those kinds of issues are a little bit sticky to work with.

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But I come to this debate as all other members do. The member came here in good conscience as an honourable member to bring forward an issue for debate. That's what we're doing here this morning. I'm just saying, I'm prepared to give you second reading to get it into committee, but I want you to know now, depending on what we do in committee, I probably wouldn't support this bill as is at third reading. In fact, I won't, because I think it is problematic to go to third reading the that it is.

I just used those as examples. It makes sense if you've got a major drivetrain problem, a major engine problem, a transmission problem, an electronics problem, as far as wiring harnesses and stuff like that—yeah, it makes some sense then to say, "OK, the dealer has not been able to resolve the problem; the manufacturer has been unable to respond to the dealer's request to get the problem fixed." I think in those cases you allow the trade of the vehicle to happen, which brings up another issue that I want to bring up in a minute. But on some of the smaller stuff that could be more than \$1,000, I think it's a bit unfair to the dealers and the manufacturers to be caught in the

position of having to exchange a car whose air conditioning system doesn't work. You know, it's cheaper to just replace the whole air conditioning system than it is a car overall, or the power lock system or something that is not as critical for the overall maintenance over the longer term.

The other issue that we need to think about when we go to committee is, once the car is exchanged—let's say there is a major defect and the car is exchanged. That car is then going to go off for sale somewhere else. I take it we contemplate that that car will then be viewed as a second-hand car, and I can't believe that we would extend this legislation to the second-hand car.

I see you nodding no. I'm glad to see that, because then you knew where I was going. This thing would be just like flying an airplane, when you end up in a spiral dive and can't pull it out. Eventually this thing would crash to the ground and there's not much you could do about it. So I'm glad to see that's not the case.

But I do think there are a couple of things that we need to think about regarding the second vehicle. It probably would be a good idea, Mr Sampson, if we were to put an amendment to the legislation at committee that says, "If a car is returned under the provisions of this legislation, the car that's been brought in for exchange be at least flagged as a car that had warranty defect problems to whoever the new owner is." Even on a second-hand car, as you well know, a lot of people will go in and buy one- and two-year-old cars and say, "I don't care if I have a car that's brand new and smells as if it just came from the manufacturer. I can save \$4,000, \$5,000 or \$6,000 by buying a one-year-old car that has 12,000 or 15,000 miles on it from a rental agency. Some people, as you know in your own riding, exchange their cars every year or two.

All I think we need to do is make a friendly amendment to your legislation—and that's why it needs to go to committee—saying that once the car is exchanged and then fixed or whatever by the dealer and put back up for resale value, not only that dealer but any registered salesperson in the car industry who sells it has to indicate that that car was brought in under exchange by way of this legislation, because otherwise an unsuspecting consumer could end up buying the very problem for which this legislation was enacted. So I think it would be only fair that we do that.

The reason I say we have to be very specific in the legislation vis-à-vis that particular provision is that it applies to all dealers, because what will end up happening is, if a car is brought for exchange—let's say Mr Bradley comes in and buys a brand new Cadillac, as he does every six months. I had a ride in Alvin Curling's Caddy the other day, and I thought to myself, "Boy, maybe I should become a Liberal. Wow. Imagine that. A Caddy."

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): You own an airplane.

Mr Bisson: You know, this poor member from Timmins-James Bay drives an old 1995 Ford Ranger—I've got to redo the paint on it; I've got a 1971 Chevy

4x4 with my plow, not even diesel; and I see Liberal members running around with beautiful Cadillacs. I thought, "God, I should have been a Liberal. Geez, it would've been so much easier."

Just joking.

Mr Bryant: You have a pension.

Mr Bisson: I wish I had a pension. That's another story. But I digress, having some fun.

Members, be serious. All of us have cars of some type or other. But that was kind of fun to think about.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): Gilles has a million-dollar pension.

Mr Bisson: My pension was a million dollars?

Mr Bryant: Yes. You heard it.

Mr Agostino: With money like that you could buy yourself a new plane.

Mr Bisson: Another plane? I could have two? A twin?

Mr Agostino: Yeah, you could have two planes.

Mr Bisson: Oh, wow. That would be cool. Anyway, I was just making the point—

Mr Bryant: Then you're a Tory.

Mr Bisson: But I'd be a Tory if I had a twin—exactly.

To go back to Mr Bradley, I just make the point, as I was saying, that we need an amendment. Boy, did I ever digress that time. Let's focus on this legislation. We need an amendment that basically says, "Let's protect the unsuspecting second buyer so the second buyer doesn't get caught with the warranty problems of the person who traded in the car. If he or she decides to buy the car, the person does so knowing full well there were warranty problems with this car, and that's the reason it is being resold."

I'm saying that we have to make sure the legislation is drafted so that no matter where that car goes back for sale in Ontario, it has to be tagged. As we well know, Mr Bradley comes in and buys a brand new car and has his car traded on the third occurrence. The car dealership in St Catharines then says, "I'm going to trade that car to a dealer in Brampton or Timmins," and somebody up there buys the car. So it may not be the dealer himself or herself who made the exchange who will be the seller of the second-hand car. We have to make that amendment so that where any dealer within the province of Ontario or car salesperson basically goes for resale on the car, that the particular provision can happen.

Like I say, it's not a bad idea. I'm sure—I was talking to Mr Sampson—Phil Edmonston, from Montreal, probably likes this kind of legislation, along with some other people. I would see it as a good tool that people could use in order to make sure that warranty work is done. Provided that we make those particular amendments, I think that would be pretty good legislation, and I'd be prepared to support it.

Again, I want to say that as is, I will not support this legislation at third reading. I only want to allow it to go to committee so that we can make friendly amendments. Once we deal with the amendment on the second owner and deal with what is a threshold for trade-in, and we

hear from both consumers and dealers, then we'll take a look at third reading.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate? The member for Mississauga south.

Mr Sampson: I asked my colleagues to give me a little bit more time so I could respond in full, as opposed to the two minutes on the back end that we would normally get, to the issues that have been raised by some of my colleagues.

I'm open to reasonable amendments to this bill, as I think any other member bringing forward a private member's bill in this House would be. In fact, last session I had a bill that dealt with regulating the auto repair business. Those are the people you take your vehicles to when you unfortunately get involved in an accident and need to get them fixed. The bill fundamentally proposed a regulatory framework with the assistance of colleagues, frankly, from all sides of the House, from all three parties actually. We were able to better that bill and bring it back to this House for third reading, which it eventually did get before the end of December last year. So I'm prepared to accept suggestions for amendments from anybody in this House, anybody viewing today or anybody who happens to pick up the coverage of this issue in this debate today.

There was one discussion about how this fits with CAMVAP, which is the Canadian Motor Vehicle Arbitration Plan, a plan set up by not all, but almost all, if you will, of the auto manufacturers selling vehicles in Ontario. I think the only car company that's not a member of CAMVAP is BMW. All the other ones are members. I think that this particular bill could work in tandem with CAMVAP to provide consumers all the options available, whether that be an arbitration plan, the courts or both, or whatever, to be able to deal with their defects.

I go back to the decision that was rendered in a case in Wisconsin. The judge, I think, made a rather simple conclusion when he rendered his decision. He said that lemon laws, rather, "seek to provide an incentive to that manufacturer to promptly return those unfortunate consumers back to where they thought they were when they first purchased" their vehicle." This gets to a point that Mr Bisson raised.

Interjection.

Mr Sampson: Yes. I don't think we need a lemon law to deal with three bad repairs to an ashtray in a car. The bill actually says, "The deficiency mentioned in paragraph 1 constitutes a substantial impairment to the use, value or safety of the motor vehicle or would cost more than \$1,000 dollars to rectify."

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I'm not quite sure that I agree with the member who said, "Look, if the air conditioning has broken three times, that's not a serious repair." I think it is. I don't think anybody buys a vehicle with air conditioning in it these days and expects that after three times it should still be broken. Having said that, I don't think the manufacturers should be required to give you a new car if they've not been able to fix a design defect in the ashtray

of the car. Somewhere there needs to be a process, and I would agree with the member, that helps to determine whether or not the defect is indeed a safety one, whether indeed the provisions of a lemon law should apply.

That's where I think there could be some very interesting co-operative relationships between CAMVAP and this particular legislation. A panel that arbitrated, for instance, on whether or not the defect should then apply to the law would be helpful. Although, frankly, all of that would still be in the hands of the judges and lawyers who help take things like this lemon law and a customer's complaint through the courts to get a decision rendered.

I don't think I've said this enough, so I'll repeat it a couple of times because it is important: I believe we produce good-quality cars in this province. In fact, I drive a North American car that has been around for some time. It's not quite of the capacity of the member from Niagara's sporty vehicle, but it does get me back and forth every once in a while. I'm not even sure I could keep up with you on a highway; I think I can only get to 100 kilometres per hour on mine. I'm not too sure if you could do more on yours or not, I say to the member from Niagara.

We do produce good vehicles in this country and this province, and I think this law will actually help consumers, dealers and manufacturers deal with the very difficult situation that arises when you have put down a lot of money and walk out of that dealership with a brand new car. You get behind the wheel, you turn the key, you drive away—the smell of a new car is there for months, if not sometimes years—you're excited about it. You get home and three days later something starts to go wrong. I don't think it's unreasonable for a consumer to expect that for the money that you put down you should get something that meets your expectations.

There are, I would argue along with Mr Bisson, groups of consumers who have higher levels of expectations than others as it relates to the quality of the vehicle they expect the day they pull off the lot. That probably exists. Perhaps an arbitration system would help determine whether or not we had an overexcited consumer or a justified consumer, but there needs to be some process that helps people deal with the frustration, the cost, the inconvenience of having to deal with a vehicle that was brand new the day they took it off the lot and shortly thereafter started to show defects that popped up either because of design flaws or some manufacturing flaw or a combination of both. There really isn't one now, other than the CAMVAP system, which is a program set up by the manufacturers themselves.

This particular bill does give that extra footing, extra tool, extra ability to the consumer to go and try to get some recourse for the significant amount of money they've spent on the vehicle purchase.

I will say to the members opposite that I am looking forward to some further input from consumer groups, dealer groups and the manufacturers; I've met with the manufacturers as well. I'm looking forward to hearing from CAMVAP, whom I've met with as well on this

matter. They contacted me after I tabled my bill last session and were concerned with its impact. I indicated to them that they shouldn't be, that this was not intended to take away their ability to market their program.

I think consumers who are watching today, those who are following this through the extensive media, who are now following this subject, will want to know that there is currently a plan that they can use. It's called CAMVAP, the Canadian Motor Vehicle Arbitration Plan. It's accessible if you have the World Wide Web at your fingertips; you can get it at CAMVAP.ca. If you have a problem with a vehicle now, dial up that Web site and see if this arbitration plan can help you. The bill we're debating today, unfortunately, can't help you right now. With the indulgence of the House, perhaps, over a period of time, it might be there to help you. But to those who have vehicle problems, may I suggest that they get in touch with CAMVAP to see if that plan can help.

I think the arbitration system is good. In a number of cases, to clog up the court systems with small tort claims around this particular bill probably wouldn't be helpful if an arbitration system could provide a fair solution at a reasonable cost. That's why I say I think a lemon bill and an arbitration plan can work together, and they do, in fact, in many jurisdictions south of the border, including California, which is where this particular bill got a lot of its design components from.

Viewers who are watching today and those who are following this debate will know that this government has committed in its throne speech to take a very serious look at a lemon bill that applies to more than just vehicles. Why should it be that you take home your fridge or your expensive stereo or your brand new TV, pull it out of the box, find it doesn't work and then be subjected to, "Send it back to manufacturer X," and six months later you might get it repaired? Why is that fair?

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): What we need is a lemon law for cable television—those thieves.

Mr Sampson: The member opposite is suggesting there should be a lemon law for members of his party. I'm not sure what he meant by that.

Consumers spend a lot of money on consumer products, and I think they expect these things to work when they get them home. It's not unusual to say that, and I don't think it's unusual to expect that. It's certainly what I expect if I ever take something home: a TV, a fridge or a new car. I expect that I've put good money down on something and I want to see it work. I think consumers are entitled to have legislative backing, an additional tool, a little bit of support to go to manufacturers and say, "Look, I bought this in good faith and I need you deal with me in good faith and make sure that whatever I end up owning is exactly what I wanted to buy at the time."

I encourage members opposite to work with me. I'm happy to hear that some of them have said that already in the debate. I'm prepared to have a full and open discussion in committee about amendments to this bill. I look forward to working with them to make it a reality in the province of Ontario and this country.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I intend to support this bill, although I do have some of the concerns that some of my colleagues have mentioned. That's why I think sending bills of this kind to committee for amendments is very helpful. Unfortunately, when we get government bills and we go to committee, overwhelmingly the opposition amendments that are placed are rejected. The whip of the committee on the government side has been given marching orders from the Premier's office on what shall and what shall not pass as amendments. With a private member's bill, we hope that would be different, so I look forward to that.

I thought at first when we mentioned automobiles that the member was going to bring forward a bill on automobile insurance, because those of us who have constituency offices—and that's everyone in this Legislature—know that people have been calling our constituency offices about huge increases in premium rates for car insurance, and indeed for other kinds of insurance. It may be that this member or another member at some time in the future will bring forward a bill that deals with those situations.

For instance, we have senior citizens particularly, and others, who have houses that have old oil tanks. They have to have an inspection and sometimes a tank removed. There's a tremendous cost to that. If they don't do it, they don't get insured. We have charitable organizations out there now that have to cancel events almost, or pay a lot more money to have an event, because either they can't get insurance or the insurance rate is extremely high.

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There are a number of those kinds of issues that are important in the field of consumer relations. We have the price of gasoline. No one has figured out yet what the price-of-gasoline rationale is on the part of the big oil companies. One thing I do know is when I looked at the end of last year, their profits were at an all-time high. The Republicans in the United States said, "You know, the real problem is the gas tax. It's all the tax." Yes, there is tax on gasoline, but it wasn't the tax that was going up; it was the oil companies using an excuse—any excuse they could find—to jack the price of gasoline way up. They're starting to make their way down now. We're supposed to be pleased now when we see it at 61 cents or 62 cents. We're supposed to cheer. A few years back we would have said that was gouging. That's another consumer issue that could be brought forward.

The price of utilities is very high. Natural gas prices are up for consumers, and they call our constituency offices about those and the rationale for them. The cost of hydroelectric power is a bizarre situation we're in at the present time. There are home renovation schemes and scams that people are confronted with, I would say—driveway paving and those kinds of things.

We do need protection for consumers. This bill does offer some protection, and I think it is deserving of further consideration and perhaps amendment and overall support.

We have to look at warranties and what is hidden in warranties, what is really covered in warranties. I hope the member's bill, when it's proclaimed, is proclaimed only a few weeks down the line. His colleague Raminder Gill had a bill he brought before the House which was an emergency bill because of a situation confronting limousine drivers around the airport and other taxis in the province. Now we find out that bill is not to be proclaimed and put into effect for another six months. So it got him to what looked like the election and now we find out that bill is not moving forward. So I hope this member tries to persuade his colleagues to move his bill forward after it goes to committee.

I've always purchased North American cars. There was a slogan they had for a number of years called, "Buy the car your neighbour helped to build." Living in St Catharines, we have a major General Motors operation and other operations—the Hayes company; Dana Corp, it's now called; we have TRW in St Catharines—all dealing with auto parts. It's an important industry. Our industry has done very well because we have a high-quality product that we produce. Those who supply General Motors, Ford, Chrysler and others also produce a good product. There are many small plants out there that are working very hard to improve quality. So we have seen over the years an improvement in the quality of vehicles out there.

New car dealerships, I think, are trying hard in many cases to satisfy their customers with good service. This bill speaks to situations that are exceptions, however. I think that's quite all right to speak to those exceptions.

As I say, I've been pleased with any vehicle that I've bought. I have used Chevrolets over the years. My first car was a Chevrolet. It was a good vehicle. Other North American companies make good vehicles, but there are problems that do arise. The threshold of \$1,000 may prove to be a problem. The member for Timmins-James Bay raised a couple of reasonable issues to deal with.

What about the resale of that vehicle? Let's say the company takes it back. If the company takes it back, does it get sold to somebody else and is the same defect there? I think it's important, as my colleague for Timmins-James Bay said, to make sure every dealer in Ontario is in the position of giving information that, "This is in fact a second-hand car, a used vehicle, and here's what the defect was," before selling it as a brand new vehicle or a relatively new vehicle without any defects. So that I think has to—

Mr Bisson: Jim, they'll call it a demonstrator.

Mr Bradley: Yes. He mentions they would call it a demonstrator, for instance.

I think we recognize that the kind of complaints this bill is to deal with are not frivolous complaints. We do not want to see a dealership stuck with what we would call frivolous complaints, because they try to address many of the problems that might be out there. Consumer protection is always important, and I mentioned many areas where we need consumer protection. I think there are a couple minutes left for the New Democrats. I'll

leave it to my colleague the member for Niagara Centre to deal with the cable television industry, because he always likes to deal with that particular industry. I won't move into that; I'll leave that for him this morning.

Let us look at a number of these issues. As I say, the one that's looming out there, as far as I can see, is insurance: automobile insurance, house insurance. Business people are telling me now—I've talked to a person in the tent business. That person said, "I'm in the tent business. I gave quotes to people down the line for weddings and other occasions, and then I was told by my insurance company that I have a huge hike in my premiums. As a result, I'm probably going to lose on the rental of the tents to several of these organizations."

There are many consumer issues out there to deal with. This is one of them. I intend in principle to support this legislation on second reading. I think there's a need for more scrutiny. Some of the right wingers in the government may see this and may put the kibosh on it. I hope not, but I did see one of the right wingers come into the House at this time, and he's been very successful recently in changing government policy.

Mr Kormos: As has been indicated, New Democrats support this bill in principle. We're eager to see it go to committee. Indeed, July and August might be ideal months for the committee to travel across the province and listen to public input into this bill. I'm more than eager to join the author of this bill throughout July and August, travelling around this province, listening to consumers.

I was hoping that this, as a lemon law bill, was directed at the huge rip-offs that are imposed every day by cable companies in this province.

Folks listen, please. Cancel your cable now. You get a crappy signal; you get outages; you're paying outrageous prices; you're being scammed on the packages of programming. I've had rabbit ears down where I live for the last few years. I haven't paid a cent, and quite frankly I've got a better-quality picture than I ever did with cable. Cable is a rip-off.

I've just signed up with a satellite dish. At least you've got two, maybe in some areas three, choices. I'm getting a cheaper, lower-cost package—cheaper than cable.

Mr Bradley: Is it legal?

Mr Kormos: It's perfectly legal—a far better quality signal and more control over the programming. I don't have to take the junk programming that the cable loads you up with. How many home shopping channels do you need? Cancel cable. Go rabbit ears, go antenna—zero cost. If you want to pay money, go satellite—less expensive than cable, better quality signal, more control over packaging.

You know, I don't have a problem with this legislation, but then again, I don't have a problem, because I buy my cars from a unionized dealership down in Welland, David Chev-Olds. CAW members do the repair work. I trust them. They have proven themselves reliable and trustworthy. The goal for every consumer should be

to go out there and buy North American. Don't buy European stuff or Japanese stuff; buy North American. Go to a good dealer.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Mississauga Centre has two minutes.

Mr Sampson: Before I get too much along, I want to welcome the boys and girls from Cobden public school who are here watching the debate today. I know that they'll be interested in this particular subject, because sometime not too far down the road, they will be potential owners and buyers of vehicles. They will want to know that what they're getting is a good-quality car and what they've spent a lot of their money on is a worthwhile investment.

On the resale item, before I get along too far, I actually agree with the two members who spoke about resale. This province is implementing a branding program that will deal with salvaged vehicles. There's no reason we couldn't implement a program that would say that this particular vehicle was repurchased under a lemon-law-warranty program and unless substantially repaired would carry that brand. I think that would be a fair and reasonable amendment, and I look forward to hearing that from the committee members as we come forward.

I think I want to close by referring to—

Mr Bisson: First of all, read the note.

Mr Sampson: No. It's from Brennan. It will take some time to read.

I want to conclude by saying that what really got me on to this was a message I received from one of the individuals who wrote me after I first tabled this bill. Here's their comment—I'm not going to mention any names, but I'm sure if they're watching today or reading this, they will recognize it: "At first, all I wanted to do was give up. In this day and age, who has the time to deal with something as time-consuming as a car with a definite problem with no suitable solution?"

That actually is a comment that many of the people who wrote to me would recognize, and I think this bill does provide the solution that consumers are looking for.

The Acting Speaker: This completes the time allocated for ballot item number 9. I will place the question to dispose of this ballot item at 12 o'clock noon.

1100

INQUIRY INTO
POLICE INVESTIGATIONS
OF SEXUAL ABUSE AGAINST MINORS
IN THE CORNWALL AREA ACT, 2003
LOI DE 2003 PRÉVOYANT UNE ENQUÊTE
SUR LES ENQUÊTES POLICIÈRES
RELATIVES AUX PLAINTES DE MAUVAIS
TRAITEMENTS D'ORDRE SEXUEL
INFLIGÉS À DES MINEURS
DANS LA RÉGION DE CORNWALL

Mr Guzzo moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 45, An Act to establish a commission to inquire into the investigations by police forces of complaints of

sexual abuse against minors in the Cornwall area / *Projet de loi 45, Loi visant à créer une commission chargée d'enquêter sur les enquêtes menées par des corps de police sur les plaintes de mauvais traitements d'ordre sexuel infligés à des mineurs dans la région de Cornwall.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): The member has up to 10 minutes for his presentation.

Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa West-Nepean): On April 30 this year, in this chamber, the Lieutenant Governor of this province, the Queen's representative, read our speech from the throne. I wish at this time to quote from pages 16 and 17 of that speech. He said:

"Your government believes that children, victims and other vulnerable people deserve special protection under the law. Those who would seek to harm the innocent deserve the strongest possible punishment"—not protection; punishment.

"That's why your government will fight child abuse, including increasing the front-line resources dedicated to fighting child pornography. It will also provide additional resources to rescue children from sexual exploitation, strengthen its high-risk offender strategy and try child exploitation cases in special courts as developed with the judiciary."

Twenty-three days later, the platform of this party was released, on the Friday morning of a long weekend, pray tell. You may not have heard of it, or a lot of people may not have heard of it, but I'd like to quote from it, because it picks up on the throne speech. It says on page 45:

"Protecting Our Children

"We will provide a special level of protection for children, the most vulnerable members of our society, from predators and other criminals, including:

"More than doubling the front-line resources for fighting child pornography

"Creating special courts for child exploitation cases, and expanding our system of child friendly court facilities across Ontario

"Targeting crown resources to cases involving sex crimes against children in order to help get them to trial faster

"Fighting the threat of the sex trade to children and minors by strengthening"—our present legislation

"Vigorously prosecuting employers who hire persons under 18 in the adult entertainment and sex trades

"Creating safe houses for children whom we rescue from the sex trade (funded in part by the proceeds of crime ...

"Insisting that anyone convicted of any crime involving sexual exploitation of children serve their full sentence without chance for early release."

Accepting the throne speech and the policy as drafted, I suggest to you that anyone running for this party, if there is an election called in the very near future or within the next 12 months, could not in good conscience vote against this bill.

We're dealing here with a very serious matter. It's the third time that I've brought this bill before this House. It's the root of the existence of this government.

No one here is suing or looking for money. It kind of compares to Ipperwash on that basis. It is simply an opportunity to have the truth come out.

There have been cases in the past in the Cornwall area and elsewhere here in Ontario with regard to claims for payment. There were 11 settlements that I know about in the Cornwall area, all with a confidentiality clause protecting the information from coming out.

It's very important for people to understand that this is not an attack on the Catholic Church. My friend Mr Cleary, the member for Cornwall, is a practising Roman Catholic, and he supports this bill. I myself am a practising Roman Catholic. But we are embarrassed, like a number of other people, by the \$290 million that has been paid out in recent years in the United States. It's not just the money that has been paid out by the church; it's the evidence of Cardinal Law in Boston and his former assistant, Bishop Daly, now in New York. I read the depositions on certain cases in that jurisdiction of both of these men, and I have to say to you that somebody is committing perjury. It's a very embarrassing situation.

I read the depositions of Bishop Flores in Texas, where he denied his own signature 17 times in 400 pages. Over 200 times, in 400 pages, he answered, "I don't recall," notwithstanding the evidence of his own signature. As one prosecuting attorney in Dallas said to me, "It was more like an insider trader caught with his hand in the cookie jar than a prince of the Church." Not much of that has been reported or has come forward in the press here in Canada.

I want to read to you a quote from a priest who pleaded guilty in Massachusetts in April of last year. He said, "What they," the church, "were protecting is the notion that the church is a perfect society. If the archdiocese really wanted to protect its other priests from scandal, they would have gotten those of us who abused children out of there much earlier."

That's a very, very ringing truism, and I suggest to you that it applies to this government: if we really wanted to protect children, we'd have gotten around to this a lot earlier.

I've provided, in the last two bills, volumes of evidence with regard to what has gone on. Today I have included and handed out a copy of the brochure that the Coalition for Action on Child Sexual Abuse in Cornwall has circulated. They have 20 questions. I'm not going to deal with those now because I want to touch on some of the new evidence I have circulated with my bill this time around. But I say to you that if you really didn't want an inquiry that was going to dig out the truth, you might at least sit down and answer these questions; you might sit down and give these people a truthful answer to these 20 questions.

With regard to the new evidence—some of it is historic. But I wanted to read, if I could, from a document that has come to my attention. It has not been reported in the Ottawa Citizen or the Toronto Star, and it certainly has not been reported in the Standard Freeholder in Cornwall. It's about another lawsuit in the United States.

It's not a question of a person who, after 30 years, has a recall of abuse; somebody looking for a large sum of money as a result of something that happened years ago. It's a lawsuit that was commenced in California by the diocese of San Bernardino, and the defendant is the diocese of Boston; one prince of the church suing another prince of the church. It claims that it's unprecedented. The suit against the Boston diocese was filed in April this year, and it alleges that the church officials in Boston allowed this Father Shanley to transfer to California through a series of "misrepresentations and suppression of information," and that "not disclosing Father Shanley's well-known sexual predations, dating back at least three decades and known for three decades in the Boston diocese, constituted active misconduct and negligence."

What the bishop in San Bernardino is saying is, "You sent him here, and we took him in good faith. We're getting sued, and now our insurance company wants us to sue you to get your insurance company to pay, not ours." A pleasant situation.

1110

But it wasn't the first place that the Boston diocese had sent Father Shanley. Father Shanley was an advocate of man-boy sex. He preached it, and they knew about it. He had a group that he associated with. He was sent to other places. He had associates at other places. They traded like hockey players in the National Hockey League, where the bishop is acting like a general manager: "You send me your two worst offenders and I'll send you mine. Get them out of here"—interesting theory, interesting practice. And where did some of these people go? Well, Father Shanley had been in New York as well as California. He also came to Canada. He didn't come to Toronto. We were safe in Ottawa. His associates went to New Brunswick, Quebec and Ontario. It's interesting that they would show up in eastern Ontario.

I draw the attention of the House to the documentation. I have included therein a copy of some of the old evidence. I will deal with it at a subsequent time this morning. I asked them in particular to refer to the court documentation, the draft minutes of settlement that were filed in Ottawa in the Superior Court of Justice action, and I'll try and deal with it at a later time as well.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr John C. Cleary (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): I rise in the House today with mixed emotions. I'm please to support Mr Guzzo's bill, but I am also disappointed that this bill and its variations have not yet received the full support of the Legislature. I am sad and disappointed that this has not happened, for the victims and their families, who have suffered for years and who continue to suffer because of our collective inability to bring the truth forward.

Over the past 30 years, as an elected representative of Ontario, I have never seen an issue that has divided a community as much as this has. People are hurting. The issue is not going to die. I know that until it's dealt with, it will not die. Many in our community feel very strongly that the passage of the bill would bring the truth to light and finally allow the community to heal. It is for this

reason that I feel compelled to support Mr Guzzo's attempts to see the development of a public inquiry.

Although the background and history of this case have been presented in the House before, I believe it deserves repeating, and I would ask all members to listen very carefully.

In the early 1990s, an investigation into the sexual abuse of minors began in our area after the police services board received several complaints. I remember them all well. The Cornwall police department underwent a review of their procedure and found nothing irregular about their investigations into the charges of sexual abuse perpetrated against minors during the course of the preceding 25 years. As a result, no formal charges were laid and the case was deemed closed.

Evidently, this internal review did not satisfy the public, and continued disapproval forced a subsequent review by the Ontario Province Police. The OPP investigation was completed in December 1994, and the results of that investigation mirrored the previous one. The investigation cited no conclusive evidence to lay formal charges. Nevertheless, citizens' groups continued to feel that justice was not being served, and they took it upon themselves to undergo an investigation. As a result of the evidence they found, Project Truth was established and 117 charges were subsequently laid against 15 individuals. One hundred and nine of these charges were alleged to have happened before 1994.

To state that something was amiss in the investigations of the Cornwall police department and the OPP is seemingly self-evident, given the charges laid against 15 individuals. If implemented, the bill before us will help us to understand why both police departments failed in their investigations to draw out the truth of sexual abuse perpetrated against minors.

I want to take this opportunity to stress that this is not a vendetta. As I stated before, the primary purpose of this bill is to establish a commission of inquiry into the investigations undertaken by the police forces into allegations of sexual abuse against minors in our area. The bill concerns itself with the police investigations into claims of sexual abuse. The inquiry will not determine whether individuals are innocent or guilty of perpetrating sexual abuse against minors.

It is for this reason that I believe it inappropriate to implicate individuals in this Legislature. I believe that some individuals have been wrongly named as participating in these horrendous activities, and it is not our job as elected representatives to drag the names and reputations of these individuals through the mud. Questions of guilt and innocence must be dealt with before the courts, not the Legislature.

Certainly there is evidence that suggests there was a pedophile ring operating in our area. During a Project Truth trial, the defendant admitted that while he had never abused, he knew a ring was operating in eastern Ontario. A public inquiry would serve to find out why, if this ring was operating in the community, the police were not able to find the evidence until Project Truth was launched in the late 1990s.

Previous bills pertaining to the Cornwall area situation introduced by the member from Ottawa West-Nepean have been blocked by members who maintain an inquiry will impair proper court proceedings. I quote, for example, the Attorney General at the time, the Honourable Jim Flaherty: "It would be inappropriate for us as the government to take action that would potentially interfere or prejudice or in some way jeopardize criminal prosecutions arising out of very serious events that are alleged to have taken place in the Cornwall area over the course of some years."

I want to assure the honourable members of the House that this couldn't be further from the truth. Take, for example, the precedent of Walkerton, where independent inquiries were conducted at the same time as criminal investigations and proceedings were underway. The creation of this commission of inquiry can be tailored so that it doesn't in any way unduly prejudice any criminal investigations. These are all arguments that have been made in the past by the member from Ottawa West-Nepean, and as a judge he is much better suited than I am to make these statements.

In closing, I want to thank the member across the way for spearheading this inquiry. I want to thank him for his honesty and commitment to this file. The work he has done has been unparalleled, and I want to assure him that he has not gone unnoticed in my riding for the non-partisan way he has handled this case.

1120

The bill is an important to recovery in our community. It is time the community is given the facts and begins to heal old wounds.

I have to talk about the 12,000 people in my community who presented 12,000 names on the petition. These constituents were from my riding and from Prescott-Russell.

All the issues that were dealt with on this particular incident—the public inquiry, the police investigation—were handled through my Cornwall office at the request of victims and constituents.

Some victims came from other provinces so that I could hear what they had to say. Some of the ones who have been named told me they were not guilty. They shook my hand and looked me in the eye. In my opinion, they are innocent. This is the reason why I say we should have a public inquiry, because when you see a grown man come into your office with his wife or a family member with tears in his eyes, there's a problem there.

I do want to thank the member for bringing this before the Legislature again.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): I rise again, as I have on a number of occasions, as a result of Mr Guzzo bringing forward bills and resolutions time and time again. I'm glad that I'm here again, because I don't know whether we're going to get another chance to deal with this issue in this place during the time of this Parliament.

I think any objective observer who's watching and listening to the discussion has got to be at least somewhat moved by the fact that this is originating from the gov-

ernment's own benches. So the last thing in the world that this is is any kind of political ploy. The fact that the honourable member who's raising this, Mr Guzzo, is a former judge adds that much more weight to the merit of the arguments, as does the fact that the Liberal member in the area, Mr Cleary, is supportive today and has been, I believe—correct me if I'm wrong—supportive all along the way to get this dealt with. And it's his community as much as Mr Guzzo's.

How do I fit into this? Why do I feel so close to this? Part of the time frame involved here was during my watch. I was the civilian head, the public person accountable for the OPP during some of the time that's here. If there's anything wrong there, I want to say very clearly once again, as a former Solicitor General, that I want it to come out.

Now, does that mean I may have been found remiss or derelict in my duties? I don't know. I hope not. I don't think so. But was there something I did that I shouldn't have, or, more importantly, something I didn't do that I should have? I don't know, but I'm not afraid to have that come out.

The process has worked to the extent that this has not gone away, and if at the end of the day, whenever that is, it turns out that there was good reason for us to continually debate this issue, then the system does work. But part of that system is for the government to recognize that there are points along the way where debates in this House cannot be ignored.

You've got the government's own member who lives in the area, a former judge, continuously rising in his place and saying, "There's something wrong here. Something has to be done, and I'm calling on my government to do it."

Again, you've got the Liberal opposition member for the area, notwithstanding some concerns he has raised, pointing out that this is not a vendetta from his point of view and that there are innocent names to be cleared as much as there are other facts to be found out.

I'm rising as a member of the third party, and I believe I'm speaking for my caucus when I say that we support this. My House leader is indicating that's the case. Certainly as an individual parliamentarian responsible in part for the time that's here, I want this to be done. That's the only way we can make the justice system work. Yes, elected officials have a responsibility to back the system. If the Attorney General and the Solicitor General of the day aren't supporting the justice system and the processes we have, we don't have a justice system.

The flip side of that responsibility is that when something is wrong—and make no mistake: justice systems are created by people; people make mistakes. There are complicated systems; systems fail. Information gets played with, facts get twisted, people lie. Sometimes innocent people get hurt. For all those reasons, part of the system needs to be that when we reach a certain trigger—and I grant you, this is not necessarily part of the normal justice system appeal process. You don't normally go from the courts to the floor of the Legislature. But I

maintain that part of the system has got to be that when you've got something like you have here today, with Mr Guzzo, Mr Cleary, myself and, I'm willing to bet, a number of other members who are going to rise in their place and support this also, when we reach that point in this political process and in this imperfect justice system, notwithstanding the fact, and I want to go on the record as saying this, that we have arguably one of the best justice systems, if not the best, in the world, I can't for the life of me understand how the current Solicitor General, Attorney General and Premier can continue to ignore this issue.

This speaks to some of the values that each of us as members and as parents hold as close and dear to our hearts as you can find. We're talking about the potential abuse of our children. Yet again, there's no politics being played here. I challenge any member to stand up and point a finger, and be clear who you're talking about, at anyone who is playing politics with this issue. That's a hard argument to make in this case today, and what's a harder argument to make is to deny the next step.

I suspect Mr Guzzo would be prepared to consider any alternative that the government might come to him with, if at the end of the day he and Mr Cleary and others felt it was going to bring to light the issues they think are still being kept in the dark. I want to emphasize again that I don't know whether anybody has done anything wrong with intent or whether this is just a miscarriage of justice. I don't know, but neither does anybody else, and that's the point.

The government cannot in good conscience continue to ignore this issue. Our justice and policing systems only work when the public has faith in them. Part of that process, again, is where we are today. This cannot be ignored. It's only going to get worse. It festers. We hear the members from the area setting aside their partisan politics on the brink of an election, probably within a few months. They are coming forward and saying, "Help us remove this stain, this question, that hangs over our community." Come on, there are a lot of people who speak of this. We all hear it. We hear a lot of things. Most of it's not true. But in this case there are enough questions and enough evidence that something needs to be done.

1130

This really is the court of last appeal in this case. If the system itself, through its appeal procedure and investigative processes, hasn't reached a conclusion that satisfies the questions at hand and the ministers of the day refuse, including the first minister, Premier Eves, as his predecessor Premier Harris refused, to step in, then I can appreciate the frustration of Mr Guzzo, who I'm sure doesn't really want to stand up and have this kind of discussion about his own cabinet colleagues, again, on the ramp-up to an election. I don't think he cherishes that, but he's doing the one thing he can do as a local member, and that is to wait for your opportunity, and when you have that opportunity, seize it, and that's what he's doing.

Now we're seeing the kind of support we've seen so far. We have another roughly half hour to go on the clock. I'll be very shocked if anybody stands up and makes a case that we ought not to do this. For the people affected, for the communities affected, for the reputation of those communities and of those individuals, we have to get to the bottom of this. It's not going to happen by itself, and it's not going to go away.

That's why I feel so strongly about this, because I've been there. I have enough concern as a former Solicitor General to stand up and put my reputation on the line, both now and in terms of the time that I was in office, to put all of that on the line, and what I want to know is, why isn't everybody else who had some responsibilities during the time frames involved prepared to do the same thing? There is no adequate answer, not when you consider how many years we've been dealing with this.

The people of eastern Ontario deserve better from their government. They're entitled to have their issue treated with the respect and severity it deserves. Make no mistake about it: if this were happening in downtown Toronto, I think we'd have a whole different approach to this. But somehow, because it's far away from Toronto, it's eastern Ontario—I don't know; is that part of it?

Interjection.

Mr Christopherson: I hear one of the members from the area saying, "I hope not." I agree with him. I hope not, and I suspect that's not the case. I don't think it's a matter of geography. But when you don't have answers from the people who are in positions to answer questions and give reasons, you have to reach out for some rationale, because the only thing left after that gets into some really dicey motivations. I think the government owes it to the respect of this place and to the respect of the members who have spoken, especially those who represent the area, to come in here right now: the Attorney General, the Solicitor General, at the very least the parliamentary assistants to those two ministers or the parliamentary assistant to the Premier, or, best yet, the Premier himself. But somebody should walk in here in the next 20 minutes and either say, "Yes; this government supports the pursuit of truth," or give some damned good reasons why not.

Silence is unacceptable. If I were more learned, I'm sure I could reach for quotes from times gone by about what it says about individuals who don't do anything. Dante comes to mind. This is as serious—I'm not going to go over the top and say it's the most serious, but I'm going to say to you that this is as serious an issue as we can deal with, during this time in particular, during private members' public business.

I want to conclude my remarks by again being very clear that this caucus, the NDP caucus and myself as a former Solicitor General, support this. We want the inquiry. We want the truth. I say to my colleagues, if we want the public to continue to support our police and our justice system when they go wrong, we're the ones that have to step in. Human nature is going to take place. All through systems—and you know what I'm talking

about—when people get frightened that they've made a mistake or they're going to be found out or that they may have had a part, even if it wasn't anything criminal, just somebody didn't do their job the way it should have been done; whatever. There are a whole lot of things that kick in along the way, and if we accept the fact that they aren't perfect systems, they aren't perfect people who run those systems—with all due respect, judges aren't perfect. They're no more perfect than cabinet members and MPPs and everybody else.

But the public has a right, if we're going to maintain the reputation of the kind of justice system we're proud of, that when something goes wrong, we've got to step forward and put the light of truth on it. We have to, because if we don't, it's the slippery slope into a society that is unacceptable to all of us. If we don't rise to those responsibilities, if we don't stand here as Mr Guzzo has done and Mr Cleary has done—and I can't tell you how proud I am of them as fellow parliamentarians, to put it all on the line and say, "This has to be looked at." If we're not prepared to do that, who's going to do it? Where's the other place? Where are the other people? Who can make this happen? Who can correct this wrong? Or at the very least, who can find a process that will let us see where there were wrongs and fix them? That is equally important.

I hope that Mr Guzzo gets the unanimous support he deserves, and I hope the government listens, because it's the right thing to do for the people and communities that are affected.

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): It's a pleasure to rise this morning to speak on this issue. I'm not going to refer to the Cornwall issue, because I'm certainly no expert. I don't feel I have the information to comment properly, but I want to make general comments with regard to child abuse, whether it be physical or sexual abuse. As my colleague Mr Guzzo mentioned, it's a very serious matter, and Mr Cleary mentioned that he speaks to it with mixed emotions. It is certainly a very serious matter. How do you speak on this subject matter? Personally I find it abhorrent that anyone, whether that person is in a position of responsibility or wherever that person happens to be, would take advantage of a young person, because once an adult takes advantage of a young person, I think you're robbing that young individual of their future. I think you mark them for life.

There's no doubt that there's too much of it going on in the world. We look at the newspaper. I think the Sun has been a conducting a survey or articles in the past week. I refer to the May 27 issue. It says, "More than one million child abuse images were found secured in a steel bunker in the basement of a luxurious North York home in February 2000."

It goes to show that it's not only the poor or the medium-income but people in high places, people who have the financial wherewithal, people who are certainly in responsible positions. The article goes on, "Adult sexual interest in children is far more widespread than what we had acknowledged prior to the Internet."

There's no doubt, with the advent of the Internet, that the proliferation of child pornography has certainly gone much further than we had expected. When we talk about pornography, I think we talk about abuse. Like I said, it's difficult because you talk with mixed emotions. As a parent, I've seen my three children grow up into adults. I would hate to see somebody in a responsible position, whether it's a priest, a judge, a lawyer, an uncle, a teacher, whatever, take advantage of that young person. I don't know how I would have reacted as a parent to see my children abused by someone. I don't think I would have taken very kindly to that. As responsible citizens, whether we live in Ontario or anywhere in the world, I think we have to put ourselves in that situation. What right have we got to take advantage of young people? We don't have that right. It's not a God-given right. It's not a socially given right.

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Je veux faire des commentaires en français. Notre responsabilité est vraiment de protéger les enfants. C'est leur droit d'être protégé. C'est vraiment incroyable et j'ai beaucoup de difficulté; c'est impossible de comprendre comment une personne dans une position responsable peut prendre avantage d'un jeune enfant aujourd'hui.

I'm sure that my colleagues Mr Guzzo and Mr Cleary have looked with trepidation into the situation in Cornwall. I'm sure they've considered the subject matter. I know there are names that have been mentioned in the newspaper, in the Legislature. Like I said, it's not my role to do this, because I do not have the information, but I agree with my colleague Mr Christopherson when he said that we have to do the right thing as parliamentarians. If the system is failing our children, who is going to protect the children in this province? It is our role to make sure that whatever happens, whether it's in Cornwall, Petrolia, Grand Bend, Hamilton or anywhere in the province, we protect our young people.

There is one thing I would certainly urge the federal government to do. We've taken the responsibility of having a registry for child abusers in Ontario, and I think we have to do that at the federal level. The federal government saw fit to spend \$1 billion to have guns registered in this country. I think it's about time we started looking at where our priorities are. I think we would have been in a much better position spending \$1 billion toward trying to control child abuse in this province and in this country than spending it on gun control. I think it's much more important that we protect the young people of this province and this country.

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): This, regrettably, is the third time this bill has come before the House and it should have been resolved the first time. As a long-serving CAS board member, as a foster parent with my family for some 16 years, we have worked with quite a number of children who have been sexually abused.

It is difficult for me to find anything that is worse than the sexual abuse of a child, but it is also horrible for an individual who is maliciously and falsely accused of

sexual abuse. Both parties suffer greatly. I don't know all the facts in this case—I don't believe any members here know all the facts—but indeed as the years pass, as we continue to debate it, we lose the facts, we lose the information, making it more difficult. This is a bill that, deep in their hearts, every member in this Legislature should not hesitate for one second to support.

There are obviously questions. In my involvement with the child welfare system we have heard rumours for years about the Cornwall area. Rumours are horrible, vicious things that need to be stopped, but they can be stopped only with the presentation of the facts.

I would reverse the discussion we've had over the years here and say to all the members, why not hold an inquiry? Give me a valid reason for not holding it. We have a large number of alleged victims who have come forward, we have individuals who have come forward and gone to Mr Cleary and professed their innocence, but still the rumours exist. It simply can't be cost. If this government has \$400 million for advertisements, they have the money to hold an inquiry.

We have heard from the government side the need for the federal government to have a sexual abuse registry. That registry does not work if the province does not do its work, hold an inquiry and obtain convictions if convictions should be obtained. The federal registry will not register innocent individuals. There has to be a conviction, and that responsibility lies with the province of Ontario.

Why else can it not be held? I can't think of a reason. If there are victims out there, they need closure and healing. The young people we have fostered have had their lives changed forever. They have become an adult at the age of five or six and they know information they should never have to know. The abuse is an act they will never, ever forget until their dying day. It has altered the very fabric of their life. So if there have been actions, then have the inquiry and be able to lay that to rest and allow them to move on with counselling.

Children must be protected. The experience I have garnered from my reading and discussion with social workers is that if an individual offends against a child, the odds are extremely high they will reoffend. If there are indeed offenders who have escaped the justice system, this inquiry must be held. I know without a doubt there is not one member in this House who would not be deeply disturbed if they knew that as a result of this inaction there were future offences taking place, destroying our young people's lives.

The inquiry must be held to determine if in fact there are offenders, and justice must be done. We in this Legislature have the ultimate responsibility to protect our children. This role of MPP is not a power role; it does not give us the power to be particularly important in the province. It makes us servants of the people of Ontario, who very clearly have said to their members in their community, "We want this matter laid to rest. We want guilt, if there is, determined; we want innocence, if there is, determined."

We are here as a voice of the people in our community and the voice of the people in Ontario. We have heard now for four years the voice of the people in Ontario saying, "We want justice and we want to protect our children."

I urge every member to forget partisan politics and think about the young people of Cornwall who need protection, think about the people of Cornwall who want justice and think about the victims to allow them to move on and be able to develop the opportunities they need, because at this point they are not getting the supports they need as victims.

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): Let me first compliment the member from Ottawa West-Nepean for bringing forward this bill again.

I usually start off with a comment or two saying it's a pleasure to speak to the bill. This is not a pleasure. I feel it's an obligation on my part to speak to this bill, and I believe my conscience also dictates that I speak to this bill.

This bill is about, to a degree, the condition of our society these days. It's about truth. It's about getting to the bottom of what really happened over the last 10 or 15 years in the Cornwall area. It's about getting answers that are long overdue.

Sexual abuse of minors, I believe, is becoming a blight on our society and we don't seem to be able to rectify it, nor do we seem to be able to solve the problem. Sexual abuse of minors should not be tolerated in this country, in our society. This bill is about making sure, through extensive investigation, re-looking at evidence, looking at the circumstances surrounding the various instances, revisiting all the evidence, justice prevailed or not. I want to make sure there has not been a blind eye turned to any investigation of this type. This is not about a criticism of it. It's about making sure that we know what really happened down there and making sure that it does not happen again. As I mentioned, sexual abuse, in my mind, is intolerable. If a public inquiry into this situation stops one more incident of sexual abuse in this province or this country, then maybe it was worthwhile.

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I'm very fortunate that, first of all, I have three kids. Secondly, I have eight grandchildren. Four of them are young ladies and four are young gentlemen, and two of them happened to be in my house last Sunday. The last two are twin boys. Maybe Jim can relate a bit to this. Twins or triplets are interesting, and these two young gentlemen are interesting. They are coming on three years old and they are an absolute delight.

Mr Frank Mazzilli (London-Fanshawe): Really?

Mr Stewart: Yes, they are. They take after their mother and their grandmother, not their father and their grandfather.

Mr Rob Sampson (Mississauga Centre): And you can thank the Lord for that.

Mr Stewart: Absolutely. That's right.

Mr Guzzo asked me to speak to this bill last week. I happened to be watching these two kids playing around

on the rug on Sunday and I thought to myself, "What would you do if you knew that anybody was abusing those two kids?" I shudder to think what I might do if I knew that somebody was abusing those two kids or the grandkids I have of the other sex. Maybe some people in the public will say, "He sounds like he's a very bad man." Well, maybe I am. But look in the mirror and look at your grandkids and say, "What would I do if I knew somebody was sexually abusing them?" You know that the experience those kids would have to go through all their life would be twice as bad if those who committed the crime, or the sexual abuse, were not prosecuted.

I am extremely supportive of this bill. I think this type of inquiry has to be done, should be done and it is the responsibility of our government to look into it.

When you come to vote on this bill, think about Cornwall, think about the other Cornwalls in this great country and think about the possibility that there could be other Cornwalls in the future. This is happening every day in our society. It's happening in our schools. It's happening in our spiritual communities. It's happening on the streets. It's happening in the homes. I would suggest to you that we'd better find out all the facts in this particular case. If there are those who committed a crime, then they should be prosecuted to give the victims some sort of closure.

As I mentioned, there are many questions that have come up during these past many numbers of years, questions like, why did the Catholic church violate its own protocol by paying \$32,000 in hush money to a former altar boy who complained about being sexually abused by a priest? I don't care whether it's a priest or who it is; if it's sexual abuse of a minor, it is wrong. Why did the Cornwall police drop an investigation into a charge of child sexual abuse by a priest after the church's \$32,000 payoff? There are questions that should be answered. Why did the second OPP investigation find 15 people to charge when the first OPP investigation found no one to charge? I think there are many, many unanswered questions, and we have to do this type of inquiry to answer them for the victims, for the people of Cornwall and for other Ontarians, and just maybe, we can bring closure to this type of thing on behalf of the victims of Cornwall.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Guzzo: I'd like to thank my colleagues for their comments, particularly in light of the last couple of issues raised by my colleague for Peterborough. I've distributed the pamphlet that the coalition from Cornwall has distributed. It has 20 questions thereon. If you don't want an inquiry, if you've got some reason that there shouldn't be an inquiry, for God's sake, surely we should sit down and give answers to these questions. Surely it's time.

When this matter was raised in Bill 48 and Bill 103, the argument was of course that we can't do it, notwithstanding what happened at the Westray mine when they carried it on at the same time. "We can't do it. It's going to interfere with criminal prosecutions." Well, guess what? It's been five and half years since Krever on

tainted blood, and we finally got around to laying some charges—no impairment there. We may not have charged all the people, all the higher-ups, but it hasn't impaired it. And in Walkerton, have we laid charges as result of an inquiry that went forth? Of course. So the arguments that have been put forward in the past have been dispelled and properly so.

When I stood in this place on Bill 48 and Bill 103, I made a statement that this was either the most incompetent police investigation that has been reviewed by the member for Cornwall—where the Cornwall police said there was nothing there; they reviewed themselves. They called in the Ottawa police, a six-month commitment, and after six days the Ottawa police said, “No, we're not going to touch it. We haven't the time.”

Then the OPP does an investigation and says there's nothing amiss. They can't find anybody. They issue a press release on Christmas Eve. Then, when the citizens do their homework and get the evidence for them and deliver it to two ministries of this government, we go back to Project Truth and 120 charges are laid against 15 people.

I made the statement at that time that it had to be the most incompetent police situation I've seen in the Commonwealth, or there was a cover-up. Let me make it pointedly clear: I stand here today and I make no allegation of incompetence. This has been a cover-up. We're dealing with corruption, and if we don't want to face it, if we haven't got the backbone, then we have to live by it.

I started this in a very professional manner. I wrote to my Premier in confidence. I waited five months and didn't get a reply, and I rewrote to him in confidence. I was stonewalled, and then I was lied to. You read the document that I have forwarded to you, the story in the April 1 Ottawa Sun comment. It's attached to the letter signed by Inspector Hall. You will see therein what I am talking about. I have mentioned on other occasions the fact that Inspector Hall's letter is dated 67 weeks after the two ministries received the documentation. I leave it to you, and I thank you for your assistance.

The Acting Speaker: This completes the time allocated for debate on ballot item 10.

MOTOR VEHICLE MANUFACTURER'S WARRANTY ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 SUR LA GARANTIE DES FABRICANTS DE VÉHICULES AUTOMOBILES

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): We will now deal with ballot item 9.

Mr Sampson has moved second reading of Bill 40, An Act respecting warranties offered by manufacturers of motor vehicles. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Pursuant to standing order 96, this bill will be referred to the committee of the whole House.

The member for Mississauga Centre.

Mr Rob Sampson (Mississauga Centre): I just wanted to see whether you were awake, Speaker. I'd rather the bill be referred to the finance committee.

The Acting Speaker: Mr Sampson has asked that the bill be referred to the standing committee on finance. Agreed? Agreed.

INQUIRY INTO POLICE INVESTIGATIONS OF SEXUAL ABUSE AGAINST MINORS IN THE CORNWALL AREA ACT, 2003 LOI DE 2003 PRÉVOYANT UNE ENQUÊTE SUR LES ENQUÊTES POLICIÈRES RELATIVES AUX PLAINTES DE MAUVAIS TRAITEMENTS D'ORDRE SEXUEL INFLIGÉS À DES MINEURS DANS LA RÉGION DE CORNWALL

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): We will now deal with ballot item number 10.

Mr Guzzo has moved second reading of Bill 45, An Act to establish a commission to inquire into the investigations by police forces of complaints of sexual abuse against minors in the Cornwall area.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All in favour will say “aye.”

All opposed will say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1200 to 1205.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour will please stand and remain standing until their name is called.

Ayes

Agostino, Dominic	Crozier, Bruce	Miller, Norm
Arnott, Ted	Dombrowsky, Leona	Munro, Julia
Baird, John R.	Duncan, Dwight	Murdoch, Bill
Barrett, Toby	Gilchrist, Steve	O'Toole, John
Beaubien, Marcel	Gill, Raminder	Parsons, Ernie
Bisson, Gilles	Guzzo, Garry J.	Patten, Richard
Bountrogianni, Marie	Hastings, John	Phillips, Gerry
Boyer, Claudette	Kells, Morley	Prue, Michael
Bradley, James J.	Kennedy, Gerard	Pupatello, Sandra
Bryant, Michael	Kormos, Peter	Ruprecht, Tony
Caplan, David	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Sampson, Rob
Christopherson, David	Levac, David	Sergio, Mario
Clark, Brad	Martin, Tony	Smitherman, George
Cleary, John C.	Martiniuk, Gerry	Stewart, R. Gary
Colle, Mike	McDonald, AL	Wood, Bob
Cordiano, Joseph	McMeekin, Ted	

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed will please stand and remain standing until their name is called.

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 47; the nays are 0.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa West-Nepean): Mr Speaker, I'd like to ask for unanimous consent to have the bill ordered for third reading.

The Acting Speaker: Agreed? Agreed.

It being past 12 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock this afternoon.

The House adjourned from 1208 to 1330.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CHILD PROTECTION SERVICES

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): I rise today to speak of a tragedy that occurred in Hamilton. On September 29, 1997, 14-month-old baby Maliek was beaten to death and died in Hamilton General Hospital. Previous injuries to this baby included a broken left thigh bone, at which time he lost so much blood before being treated that he needed a blood transfusion before surgery, severe bruises and scrapes to his body. At the time of his death, the baby was in a coma and had a cast from hip to toe on the left side of his body, was covered in old and new bruises, and had scrapes on his face, a fresh cut on his upper lip and three skull fractures. Throughout his short life, he was admitted to hospitals in Hamilton and Brantford. The children's aid societies in Hamilton and Brantford had been involved. It was only eight days after the children's aid society approved his release that this baby was murdered. His father was convicted of second-degree murder.

I stand here today to ask the solicitor general to call a public inquiry into the child protection system in Ontario. The Hamilton children's aid society has also urged him to do the same.

This type of tragedy today in Ontario is unacceptable, unexplainable and cannot be allowed to be repeated. Hospitals were involved and children's aid societies were involved, yet somehow this 14-month-old, innocent, cute, chubby little child died a death that none of us could ever imagine anyone should go through. What he suffered in the 14 months of his life, most people, fortunately, don't ever suffer in their whole life.

I stand here today and urge the solicitor general to call an inquest into the child protection system in Ontario and how it let this young, innocent child down.

SUPERBUILD

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): I rise today to make an announcement that our government has invested \$268,000 through SuperBuild to build a new arena on Georgina Island in my riding to benefit the Chippewa community. It was a pleasure for me to present the cheque to Chief Bill McCue and Councillor Brett Mooney.

This SuperBuild investment will help provide an important gathering place where families can enjoy access to a variety of recreational activities for the community. Chief McCue was pleased that the new arena will provide a much-needed community facility and will improve the quality of life for Georgina Island residents.

The Ontario SuperBuild program recognizes that investments in sports and recreational infrastructure make an important contribution to Ontario's quality of life.

The residents of the town of East Gwillimbury have also benefited from SuperBuild's investment to rehabilitate and redesign the 22-acre Anchor Park to maximize use for both family and sports recreation activities. Building community facilities means that families can come together to participate in recreational activities. This is fundamental to the strength and health of our communities.

GAY PRIDE WEEK

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): I want to stand before the House and encourage all members of the Ontario Legislature to mark June 23 to 29 on their calendars, because it's the annual Gay Pride events in the city of Toronto. Everybody will know that Gay Pride is one of the signature events in the city of Toronto. Bookended with Caribana, it marks one of the most important kickoffs of the summer season in our city.

We also know from media reports that the organizers of Gay Pride are experiencing some concerns around their ability to stage the event as they always have because of revenue declines. I want to say that this event, which occurs annually, attracts hundreds of thousands of people and contributes more than \$76 million in economic impact to the city of Toronto.

I've been working very hard with Minister Coburn, the Minister of Tourism, and other officials in the Ontario government and other levels of government to ensure the support that is required to make sure this signature event for the city of Toronto is staged as it always has been, to ensure that we put our best face forward, and to make sure we send a message to the world that Toronto is not being impacted and that people are coming out and supporting signature events in our city.

I think it's important this year for all of us who live in Toronto and who want to celebrate our city that we send the clearest possible message by supporting Gay PrideWeek. I would like to extend an invitation to any of those people who have looked in on this event from home to come down to Yonge Street on June 29 and experience one of the most extraordinary events to take place in our city over the course of a year.

EDUCATION LABOUR DISPUTE

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): I rise to express my utter astonishment at the refusal of the Liberals across the way to support the government bill to return Toronto's Catholic students back to the classrooms, where they belong. They should be ashamed of themselves. They spin and weave to avoid supporting the return to the classrooms that is being demanded by

parents, who rightly fear their children's school year could be put in jeopardy.

We on this side of the House believe that parents and teachers want their students back in the classroom. We believe in putting students first. That's why Premier Eves introduced Bill 28, the back-to-school bill.

I've yet to hear a rational explanation as to why Liberals oppose this bill. I wish they would come clean so that parents could hear their questionable logic. Surely they are not against teachers filling out report cards with comments and grades—obviously they are; otherwise, they'd support our bill. Nor can they possibly be against teachers administering tests. Similarly, they must support teachers being able to meet with parents and maintaining co-operative education placements, as well as participating in graduation events—but obviously they don't, because they're not supporting this bill.

These are normal responsibilities of teachers, and I can't believe that Liberals believe otherwise. I wish they'd come clean and clearly explain why they won't support the parents who wish an early return to school. Or is it that Liberals are so afraid of teachers' union bosses that they are unable to proceed with what is right for our kids?

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): The deluge of taxpayer-paid advertising by the Eves Conservatives, the gang that was elected promising to eliminate wasteful spending by government, continues unabated, even with the need for funding for an unexpected health crisis increasing daily.

For several months, the Conservative government of Ernie Eves has used hard-earned taxpayers' dollars to engage in the most blatant self-congratulatory, partisan advertising blitz on television and radio, in newspapers and magazines, in glossy pamphlets delivered to every household in Ontario, and on huge, newly erected highway signs.

The Chair of Management Board recently admitted that the Harris-Eves advertising spending has now topped \$400 million. But it is not the total figure that is a source of anger in the population; it is the clearly partisan nature of the ads. This abuse of public office and of Ontario taxpayers has become so outrageous that it has prompted the Canadian Taxpayers Federation and even those who benefit financially from this government largesse, media outlets themselves, to point a critical finger at this unwarranted, unethical and hypocritical practice.

The Eves Conservatives should repay the taxpayers of this province for this transgression and halt what amounts to cheating in the electoral process.

The government should immediately enact the bill presented to the Ontario Legislature by Liberal leader Dalton McGuinty, which would once and for all time end this abuse by placing in the hands of the independent Provincial Auditor the authority to reject any advertising deemed to be of a self-congratulatory, partisan nature.

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SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): I rise today to add my voice to that of my colleagues from Hamilton East, Hamilton Mountain, and Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot who have raised the issue, as we have for some time, about school closures in the city of Hamilton. We've now got another round of closures that we're looking at. Once again, it's ripping the community apart. This time it's not any one particular part of the city; it's the east end, it's downtown Hamilton, it's also in Dundas. It covers the entire city. I can tell you there is great concern and worry on the part of parents.

I want to bring forward three reasons why this government has an obligation, in my opinion, to put a moratorium on school closures. The first one is, of course, the Rozanski report. If you had funded totally the recommendations of the Rozanski report, we believe there's a good chance it wouldn't be necessary to close these inner-city schools. You've underfunded by over \$1 billion, and that is a key issue.

Secondly, there's an election coming soon, and I've got to hope things could only get better and there would be more money available. It may be too late if we've already closed these schools—another reason to wait.

The last one is that the person making the decision is not an elected representative; he's an appointee. What did he say yesterday? He said, "Our focus as an organization is not the quality of life in a community, but the quality of education in the classroom." Well, let me tell you that for our trustees the quality of life in the community is just as important as what happens in that classroom, and they ought not be separated. Only elected trustees are going to adequately deal with that issue.

WORLD CATHOLIC EDUCATION DAY

Mr Bob Wood (London West): Today, May 29, 2003, is World Catholic Education Day. Throughout Ontario, students in Catholic schools are celebrating learning in their Catholic faith. We can be proud of the government's commitment to funding Ontario's Catholic schools. It was a Conservative government that extended full funding to Catholic education under former Premier Bill Davis. The Ernie Eves government continues the proud tradition of supporting Ontario's Catholic school system.

Students in Catholic schools across Ontario celebrate today their ability to learn in their faith and learn the values espoused in the system. Catholics in Ontario and across Canada will join Catholics around the world in celebration of World Catholic Education Day. This day is an opportunity for Catholic schools to celebrate their mission while joining the world in an expression of faith.

In Canada, Catholic schools educate almost one million students, and of those, 600,000 are educated in

Ontario's Catholic school system. Students in Ontario's Catholic education system reflect the world mosaic of cultures that internationally are celebrating World Catholic Education Day today.

Each year, Ontario's Catholic schools celebrate Catholic education during Catholic Education Week, which was held this year from April 28 to May 2.

I know all members of the House will join with me in acknowledging World Catholic Education Day on behalf of the students, families and teachers in Ontario's Catholic Education System.

EDUCATION TAX CREDIT

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain): You just can't trust Ernie Eves. In 2001, Ernie Eves said the private school tax credit was ludicrous. Ernie declared, "These tax credits should be available only to parents whose children are in schools that teach the curriculum set out by the Ministry of Education."

Ernie said, "A party that worked for seven years to develop core curriculum values shouldn't abandon those values if your child happens to be in the private education system."

Ernie even said, "Are you in favour of a school that doesn't teach any basic curriculum and teaches hatred?"

Those are Ernie Eves's words from the fall of 2001.

Of course, as with all things Ernie Eves says, his position quickly changed. Within a few months, Ernie Eves was saying he "had no expectation that a public school curriculum should be an essential part of an independent school education system."

What did Jim Flaherty have to say about that? He said, "I think it was a flip-flop." You can't trust Ernie Eves, and Jim Flaherty agrees.

Of course, Ernie Eves isn't the only Conservative to change his position on the private school tax credit. Mike Harris once said it would take \$700 million out of public schools. Janet Ecker said it would undermine public education.

The public has a choice: they can choose five more years of the Harris-Eves Tories tearing our schools down or Dalton McGuinty's Liberals building them up. They can choose between the best public education for all our kids or private education for those who have the money and can afford to pay. They can choose change. They can choose a responsible government like the Dalton McGuinty government. They will trust them.

CHILDREN'S GOLF PROGRAM

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): I rise today to inform the House of a wonderful announcement made in Niagara on Tuesday. Former Premier Mike Harris, who is now the chairman of Ontario's Promise, joined the Niagara Parks Commission, the Boys and Girls Club of Niagara, and myself to announce a program for Niagara's kids. The Boys and Girls Club will supervise 72 underprivileged kids in the Niagara region who will be able to

attend the Niagara Parks Commission's Legends on the Niagara famed golf academy. The 72 kids will get three lessons donated by the teaching staff at Legends on the Niagara. At the end of those three lessons over the summer they will get an opportunity to play in Niagara Parks Commission's Oak Hall golf course.

The program fulfills some of Ontario's Promise's principles; for instance, providing a safe place to play and learn and ensuring an adult who cares in their lives. I want to thank Cathy Sherk, Tony Evershed, Geoff Law and the teaching staff at Legends on the Niagara, who will be the lead pros teaching the kids. I want to thank Niagara Parks Commission chair Brian Merrett and the commissioners, who agreed to this program. Thanks also to Joanne Hett and her staff at the Boys and Girls Club, as well as the board who will oversee the program, which is great news for kids who would otherwise not get such an opportunity. I know the 10 kids who were there to open the program on Tuesday had a great day, and they're very much looking forward to it.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Just before we continue we have with us, in the members' gallery east, a member of the Legislative Assembly in Alberta, Brent Rathgeber. He's the member for Edmonton-Calder constituency. Please welcome our colleague from Alberta.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

MANDATORY RETIREMENT ELIMINATION ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 ABOLISSANT LA RETRAITE OBLIGATOIRE

Mr DeFaria moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 68, An Act to amend the provisions of certain Acts respecting the age of retirement / Projet de loi 68, Loi modifiant les dispositions de certaines lois concernant l'âge de la retraite.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1348 to 1353.

The Speaker: All those in favour will please will rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Agostino, Dominic
Arnott, Ted
Baird, John R.
Barrett, Toby
Beaubien, Marcel

Elliott, Brenda
Flaherty, Jim
Galt, Doug
Gilchrist, Steve
Gill, Raminder

Murdoch, Bill
Mushinski, Marilyn
Newman, Dan
O'Toole, John
Ouellette, Jerry J.

Bountrogianni, Marie	Hardeman, Ernie	Parsons, Ernie
Boyer, Claudette	Hastings, John	Phillips, Gerry
Bradley, James J.	Hudak, Tim	Pupatello, Sandra
Bryant, Michael	Jackson, Cameron	Runciman, Robert W.
Caplan, David	Johns, Helen	Ruprecht, Tony
Clark, Brad	Kells, Morley	Sampson, Rob
Clement, Tony	Klees, Frank	Sergio, Mario
Coburn, Brian	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Smitherman, George
Colle, Mike	Levac, David	Stewart, R. Gary
Conway, Sean G.	Martiniuk, Gerry	Stockwell, Chris
Cordiano, Joseph	Maves, Bart	Tsubouchi, David H.
Cunningham, Dianne	Mazzilli, Frank	Turnbull, David
DeFaria, Carl	McDonald, AL	Wilson, Jim
Dombrowsky, Leona	McMeekin, Ted	Witmer, Elizabeth
Duncan, Dwight	Miller, Norm	Wood, Bob
Dunlop, Garfield	Molinari, Tina R.	Young, David
Ecker, Janet	Munro, Julia	

The Speaker: All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Bisson, Gilles	Kormos, Peter	Martin, Tony
Christopherson, David	Marchese, Rosario	Prue, Michael
Hampton, Howard	Martel, Shelley	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 65; the nays are 8.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

The minister for a short statement?

Hon Carl DeFaria (Minister of Citizenship, minister responsible for seniors): I will defer my statement to ministers' statements.

ASSESSMENT AMENDMENT ACT (IMPROVEMENTS FOR SENIORS AND THE DISABLED), 2003

LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'ÉVALUATION FONCIÈRE (AMÉLIORATIONS À L'INTENTION DES PERSONNES ÂGÉES OU AYANT UNE INCAPACITÉ)

Mr Christopherson moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 69, An Act to amend the Assessment Act to more fairly permit exemptions from assessment to benefit senior citizens and disabled persons / Projet de loi 69, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'évaluation foncière pour rendre l'exemption d'impôt plus équitable à l'égard des personnes âgées ou ayant une incapacité.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): I thank the Legislature for the vote. This would be, I believe, the third or fourth time I've introduced this bill.

I want to thank Reg Michor for his ongoing assistance in drafting the bill. Reg has worked tirelessly advocating on behalf of seniors and those with physical disabilities who want to stay in their own homes with their families.

This bill amends the Assessment Act to extend the exemption from taxation for certain features of homes built or renovated to benefit elderly or disabled residents. I would call on the government to please pass this bill in the interest of fairness to seniors and those with disabilities.

REMOVAL OF OCCUPATIONAL BARRIERS ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 SUR L'ÉLIMINATION DES OBSTACLES PROFESSIONNELS

Mr Ruprecht moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 70, An Act to remove barriers to the practice of occupations, professions and trades in Ontario for persons with appropriate qualifications obtained outside Ontario / Projet de loi 70, Loi visant à éliminer les obstacles à l'exercice de professions et de métiers en Ontario par quiconque a obtenu ailleurs les qualités professionnelles appropriées.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I would first like to thank the members for unanimously approving this bill that has been introduced twice before.

This bill will ensure that those who are qualified will have a fair chance to contribute to the development of our country. The bill requires that occupational bodies in considering applications for approval to practise in an occupation do not discriminate against applicants on the basis that they have obtained their occupational qualifications elsewhere.

Information about the process for applying for occupational approval is to be made accessible to everyone within and outside of Ontario. The only basis for deciding whether an applicant is competent to practise the occupation in Ontario is to be the performance capacity of the applicant.

1400

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs): I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon Mr Baird: I move that notwithstanding standing order 96(d), the following changes be made to the ballot list for private members' public business:

Mr Kennedy and Mr Phillips exchange places in order of precedence such that Mr Kennedy assumes ballot item number 42 and Mr Phillips assumes ballot item number 12; and

I move that notwithstanding standing order 96(g), notice for ballot items numbers 12 and 16 be waived.

Interjection: Dispense.

The Speaker: Dispense? Dispensed. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

SECURITIES ACT REVIEW

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Finance): It is my pleasure to table a report today entitled the Five-Year Review Committee Final Report—Reviewing the Securities Act. Ontario's Securities Act, as amended in 1995, requires that an advisory committee be appointed every five years to review the act, regulations and legislative needs of the Ontario Security Commission. Today's report is the first five-year review.

I would like to thank the members of the committee, and particularly its chair, Mr Purdy Crawford, QC, for their tireless work in reviewing Ontario's securities legislation. I'd like to welcome Mr Crawford, in the gallery, and thank him for the work he has done.

The committee conducted many consultations over the past two years and reviewed innumerable written submissions covering very important and significant issues. They provided many recommendations to the government to improve securities regulation and investor confidence. These recommendations will help us move forward in our continuing efforts to protect Ontario consumers and investors, and to protect the integrity of our markets.

Up-to-date securities laws play a critical role in making sure that we have fair, effective and efficient capital markets. Our government is committed to maintaining timely and effective securities laws to protect investors and to create further growth and new jobs.

We have already taken significant steps to do this. Based on the committee's advice and the interim report that they released last spring, we passed legislation last fall to increase penalties for wrongdoing and improve accountability. The provisions now in effect include maximum court fines for general offences, which have been raised from \$1 million to \$5 million, and maximum prison terms, which have been increased to five years less a day from two years.

There are new rule-making powers for the OSC to ensure that audit committees of the boards of directors of public companies play an appropriate role in ensuring the integrity of those financial statements. There are new powers for the OSC to impose fines for securities violations and to order offenders to give up their ill-gotten gains. There are stronger powers for the OSC to review the information that public companies disclose to investors. These provisions were proclaimed on April 7 this year.

Last fall we also passed legislation that will give broader rights for secondary investors to sue companies that make misleading or untrue statements or who fail to give full and timely information to investors, and these will be proclaimed later this year.

I am pleased to say that the steps we have taken to date were based on the committee's recommendations. These initiatives were analyzed in some detail by the committee, and they have been very supportive of the steps that we have taken. As well, the OSC is going to be moving forward to publish for comment proposed rules regarding executive certification of financial statements and the responsibility of audit committees for public companies.

Taken together, these measures make Ontario's system the toughest in Canada to protect our investors.

Today's report contains recommendations that will guide the government in the next steps required to make sure our securities legislation is effective and up to date. I'd like to provide the members of the House with some brief highlights from the report that we've tabled.

One of the key themes in the committee's report is that securities regulation in Canada must be sensitive to the unique nature of our capital markets in this country and the participants in it. The committee also supports a single national securities regulator and recommends continuing work to harmonize securities regulation across Canada. This is a position that our government supports, and we are working with our provincial colleagues to take further steps in this direction.

There are other matters that are identified in the report. They recommend that the government and the OSC review the current structure of the OSC because its dual role as a regulator and adjudicator may create perceptions of conflict. They recommend that we review the extent and scope of the OSC's rule-making authority and that we look at providing additional powers to various securities self-regulatory organizations.

It recommends further remedies to protect investors and new penalties for securities law violators. It addresses the issues of corporate governance such as the composition, functioning and responsibilities of boards of directors and also asks for a new, independent governance body for mutual funds.

As mentioned in the report, they deal with the need for a national securities regulator and more harmonized national securities regulation. For a securities market the size of Canada, having 13 separate regulators simply does not make sense.

We have heard from regulators, industry representatives, legal practitioners and investors that further steps must be taken to reduce the barriers faced by issuers and registrants that wish to access markets in more than one jurisdiction in Canada.

We are working with the governments of British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Quebec to improve the current regulatory structure in Canada. We also look forward to working with the federal Wise Persons' Committee in an effort to develop effective securities regulations across Canada.

Our goal is to have a practical, provincially led, national system of securities regulation that will help ensure healthy capital markets, to benefit the economy, the people of Ontario and certainly the rest of Canada.

Because of the importance of the issues raised in this report, I am announcing today that the government will strike a select committee of the Legislative Assembly, with participation by all three parties, to review the report, conduct further consultations and report back to the government this fall. We intend to respond promptly to the recommendations of the committee and to the input they receive from the public and from the financial community.

Our government will continue to work to protect consumers and strengthen the securities regulatory system. Again, I'd like to thank the many members of the committee for their tireless work on this, and also the many organizations and individuals who have provided submissions and advice to the committee.

MANDATORY RETIREMENT RETRAITE OBLIGATOIRE

Hon Carl DeFaria (Minister of Citizenship, minister responsible for seniors): Today marks a very proud day for me personally, for our government and, more important, for the 1.5 million seniors who live in this province. Our government believes that all Ontarians should enjoy equal opportunity and the freedom to participate fully in the life of their communities. Our government believes that equality of opportunity must also extend to the workplace.

It is for this reason that I'm proud to introduce the Mandatory Retirement Elimination Act, 2003. At the heart of our proposed legislation is the recognition that Ontario seniors are valued contributors to our society. The introduction of this bill is particularly fitting, as June is Seniors' Month in Ontario, a time to celebrate the many contributions seniors make to our province and our way of life, and to discuss our government's steps to improve the quality of life for all seniors across this province.

Our government is acting on several fronts. We are making record investments in long-term care; we have committed to increase funding for the long-term-care system by \$100 million annually. Funding will be directed to improving nursing and personal care. We are committed to ensuring that Ontario's long-term-care services continue to meet the needs of our growing and aging population now and in the years to come.

1410

We have introduced legislation that, if passed, would reimburse eligible seniors a portion of the residential property tax they pay on their principal residence through a new Ontario home property tax relief for seniors program.

Seniors are challenging society's assumptions about aging and are breaking new ground. Today's proposed

legislation represents a major step forward in strengthening Ontario's human rights protections for all citizens, regardless of age. The proposed Mandatory Retirement Elimination Act, 2003, would amend the Ontario Human Rights Code to protect workers aged 65 and over from discrimination in employment on the basis of age, and would eliminate mandatory retirement. Our Human Rights Code plays a vital role in protecting the rights of all Ontarians. Today's legislation would, if passed by this Legislature, strengthen that protection and extend the right to choose to work to all Ontarians.

The proposed bill would also amend the Audit Act, the Elections Act, the Health Protection and Promotion Act, the Ombudsman Act and the Public Service Act so that they will no longer set out a mandatory age of retirement. If passed, the bill would come into effect on January 1, 2005. However, mandatory retirement provisions in collective agreements that are in effect on the date of introduction of this bill, May 29, 2003, would remain in force until the collective agreement expires.

Our proposed legislation is in line with other Canadian jurisdictions such as Manitoba, Quebec, Yukon, Northwest Territories, Alberta and PEI. I am certain that you will see similar action to propose the end of age-based retirement policies become the norm in other jurisdictions in years to come. The time is right. Demographic and labour market trends in Canada all point to a dramatic increase in the number of seniors. People today are living longer, healthier and more productive and active lives. Statistics also point to skilled worker shortages in certain sectors in the coming years. Public attitudes no longer support age-based criteria in employment. We believe that seniors should have the right to continue to contribute to the economy if they so choose.

Since 1995, our government has always supported policies and services that promote dignity, independence and quality of life for our seniors. We have worked to ensure that they are able to contribute fully in their communities. This proposed legislation builds on the ongoing commitment of our government to ensure that seniors live with dignity and respect. This proposed legislation is simply the right thing to do. It is fair. It puts the choice to work into the hands of individuals, not governments or employers.

Ce projet de loi proposé est la bonne mesure à prendre. C'est équitable. Il laisse le choix qui fonctionne dans les mains des individus et non pas dans celles des gouvernements ou des employeurs.

For the vast majority of workers, these proposed amendments may not affect their decisions on retirement at all. For some, however, they would remove an unfair barrier to their freedom of choice. Individuals may simply want to remain active in their chosen careers. For many seniors, employment is fundamental to their sense of dignity and self worth. Others may face economic hardship if they are forced to retire and live on a fixed income. Forcing people into retirement when they reach 65 runs counter to our government's fundamental beliefs in equality for all Ontarians. It robs our economy of

skilled workers, and it denies seniors the opportunity to continue contributing to our economy.

We believe that Ontario's seniors have earned the right to decide whether they want to continue working beyond age 65, and I ask all members of this House to join me in supporting this historic legislation.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Statements by ministries? Seeing none, responses?

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I wanted to respond to the Minister of Citizenship's remarks on mandatory retirement, just simply to tell the public that they should be aware that my colleague Mr Mike Colle from Eglinton-Lawrence has had this piece of legislation before the House on two separate occasions. To the public who listened to the government saying, "We have a fundamental belief in this," Mr Colle tried twice to get a piece of legislation passed here in the House. But what's changed? Well, there's an election coming. So the government has decided they are going to do their polling and find a way to pick some of the ideas that people like Mr Colle have had and put them into their platform.

If you believed so strongly in this for so long, how could it be that on the very eve of an election, you suddenly find that this is a fundamentally important piece of legislation for the government? I would say to the people of Ontario, we have seen this act before.

This is a government that in 1999 promised two tax cuts that they still have not delivered—still haven't delivered, broke that promise.

I remember in 1995, the seniors in my area actually believed the government when they said, "We believe the new Fair Share health care levy, based on the ability to pay, meets the test of fairness and the requirements of the Canada Health Act while protecting the fundamental integrity of our health care system. Under this plan, there will be no new user fees." What happened? Months after that, they introduced, against the seniors of this province, brand new user fees. And what do we have coming from the government now? They are going to eliminate the Fair Share health levy.

So two things they promised: they said the funding of health care would be through the Fair Share health levy, and they are going to eliminate that. They said that was the fair way to fund health care—eliminating a major part of it. They said no new user fees; right after the 1995 election, new user fees.

The seniors in my area are angry. The 15% increase in the fees for their long-term-care facilities—the long-term-care facilities in my area are desperate for funding. All the members of the Legislature here have had pleas from them. But what do we find? The government has decided that Frank Stronach needs a \$30,000-a-year gift from the government—that's what he's going to get on the property tax credit, \$30,000 a year—while seniors in my area are desperate for help in long-term-care facilities.

So the announcement today, a copy of my colleague's proposal, is nothing more than electioneering.

SECURITIES ACT REVIEW

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale):

On behalf of the Liberal caucus and my leader, Dalton McGuinty, I'm pleased to comment on the statement by the Minister of Finance and to add my own thanks to Purdy Crawford and the committee that worked so hard for the citizens of Ontario. Purdy Crawford brings to his work a distinguished reputation, and we've had extraordinary benefit from his help.

I must say that when we saw that the Minister of Finance would be making a statement today, we did hope that statement might be about the situation plaguing insurance in this province, where 19.2% is the average rate of increase that has been approved for people who are lucky enough to get insurance. It has become a matter of luck in this province that auto insurance is available to them. So we're looking for some action from that government that likes to talk about what it's doing.

In addition to applauding the work of the committee, we agree that it's important to restore investor confidence in this province. But I find it interesting that in applauding the need for a national securities regulator, this Minister of Finance likes to forget that Ernie Eves, when he was the Minister of Finance, delayed progress on such an issue in 1995 and in 1996. That is his legacy from his time as Minister of Finance. Our party is clearly on the record in favour of that.

1420

When this select committee meets, we want to look very hard at the extent to which the Ontario Securities Commission has the enforcement tools and the resources it requires to make sure the things that are in regulations are in fact acted upon. We want to make sure, at that select committee, that the consumer investors' voice, not just the institutional investors' voice, is heard, because for too many Ontarians, freedom 55 has turned into freedom 75. We agree it's important to have capital markets that work, but we want to make sure those consumer investors have their opportunity to talk about their stories.

I'll close where I started: this government has failed the test of providing adequate and affordable auto insurance in this province. This minister has yet to act on that, and we'd like to hear from her before it's too late.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): First to the Minister of Finance and the five-year review of the Securities Act: I read the interim report from Mr Crawford's committee and one of the things the interim report called for was greater supervision and accountability where stock trades are not based on an initial prospectus but are based upon quarterly or annual reports. The minister stood before the Legislature about a year ago, introduced Bill 198 and said that stronger regulation would be there. But what do we find happened a few short months later? The minister quietly withdrew those regulations giving greater protection to investors and insisting on greater accountability in terms of the financial documents that corporations put out quarterly or at the end of the year.

The minister talks about protecting investors while she goes about weakening her own legislation, frankly defying some of the things the very review put forward. So I say to the minister, this is an unusual song and dance. The latest exposition of your behaviour shows that in fact you're prepared to undermine some of our securities protections.

MANDATORY RETIREMENT

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I want to move now to mandatory retirement. I note the announcement about mandatory retirement was made in a nursing home. I suppose what the government is saying is that those seniors who are in the nursing home should now go out and find a job. That seems to be the implication. We know that at this time the federal financial services commission head tells us there are all kinds of pension funds that are in financial trouble. The agenda for this time should be to better protect people's pensions to allow more people to have a pension so that people can retire.

But what is this government doing? This government goes to a nursing home and says to the seniors there that they should go out and find a job. People in Ontario aren't interested in working longer and harder for less. What they want is immediate investing in their pensions. What they want is portability of their pensions. What they want is more possibilities for multi-employer pension plans. What they want is inflation protection for their pension plans. What they want is better regulatory supervision by the Financial Services Commission of Ontario, such as the kind of regulatory supervision that the retirees of the co-op trustee pension plan didn't receive.

This is not the agenda. The agenda of people is not to work longer and harder for less; the agenda is for people to have a decent pension. That's what we should be looking forward to. That's why this legislation is headed in entirely the wrong direction.

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I want to respond to the comments the minister made regarding long-term care. Last July the government attempted to increase the fees for residents of long-term care facilities by 15% in a single year. That was outrageous. Then the government tried to spread the pain over three years by having that increase of 15% over three years.

The announcement the government made today is just as outrageous because the government does nothing to deal with the huge fee hike it imposed upon seniors last year. That was a fee hike of \$3.02 every day—day in, day out—a 6.75% increase in their rent. The rent hike would not have been allowed in the private rental market, because it was so far above the guideline.

The government has announced today that seniors' fee hikes for next year and the balance of this year will only be at the rate of inflation, but the government has not announced that it will roll back the huge fee hike that it imposed on seniors last year. The government should be

announcing today that the fee hike from last year beginning September 2002, which is still in effect today, will only be at the rate of inflation and that the government will compensate seniors for every cent they pay above the rate of inflation. That's what the government should have been announcing today.

This is a government that also announced there would be 2,400 new personal care aides and nurses working in long-term-care facilities. Do you know that at the public accounts session in February, when I asked the government how many new nurses and personal care aides there were, the government responded, "We are about to do a comprehensive review to determine exactly how the \$100 million was spent." They had no clue how many nurses and personal care aides had been hired.

That's how this government treats seniors. It's appalling. It's shameful.

FRANK DREA

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I rise to seek unanimous consent for each party to take up to five minutes to recognize the passing of a former MPP, the Honourable Frank Drea.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

Mr Gilchrist: It's certainly an honour, but a sad one at that, to rise here again today to make a few comments about a former colleague and a very good friend, James Francis "Frank" Drea.

Many of the members will certainly know—in fact, six of the members still in this Legislature served with Frank when he was the MPP from Scarborough Centre, elected four times and served here with great distinction from 1971 to 1985.

Frank passed away on January 16, at age 69, of pneumonia. He leaves behind his wife Jeanne, and three grown children: Catherine, Denise and Kevin. To them, and I'm sure on behalf of all my colleagues on both sides of the House, I extend the heartfelt condolences of all the members of this assembly.

Before becoming an MPP, Frank worked as a quite legendary journalist for the Toronto Telegram from 1955 to 1963. He rose to fame, in part, through coverage of the 1961 strike of the Italian workers in the building trades. This very bitter strike shut down the construction of just about everything in Toronto for weeks. For his remarkable efforts, Frank was awarded the Heywood Broun crusading journalism award in the United States, the first time the award was ever granted to a non-American, as well as winning a national newspaper award here in Canada.

He went on to work for the Steelworkers as a public relations director—both of them, he always claimed, shared a mutual hatred of Communism—and won them many victories.

Frank then returned to the Telegram to launch a column called "Action Line" that championed consumer interest. It was really one of the first of its kind anywhere

in Canada, and became one of the most popular advocacy forums anywhere in the country. Frank typically received over 1,000 letters a week. Quite frankly, the secret of his success was that he truly cared about those for whom he had to act as champion—people who couldn't fight for themselves.

He brought that same attitude into his political career when he was elected in 1971. At the time, Frank was also the president of the Canadian Society of Professional Journalists. But in 1974, he received his first extra appointment over and above being an MPP, when he was made the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations.

After winning another election, Bill Davis appointed him as the Minister of Correctional Services on September 21, 1977. While he was a minister, he helped initiate major reforms in Ontario's prison system. He returned to the Consumer and Commercial Relations portfolio a year later as minister. This portfolio allowed Frank to help modernize the insurance industry, as well as a number of other projects.

In 1981, following another electoral success, he was appointed Minister of Community and Social Services, a position he loved dearly and held for almost four years. As Minister of Comsoc, Frank worked tirelessly to improve the rights and access for persons with disabilities. He also made the ministry more accessible to the public. He said one time, "This is the community ministry. Our people have to be part of the community. I want staff to be out in the community in the normal fashion." He made every effort to make sure that people with disabilities had a place, not just in the operation of government but in all aspects of society.

1430

Frank was very comfortable with his image as a fighter for the underdog. Behind that gruff facade and that very hard-nosed attitude—in fact, on the night of his first election, he described himself as a hard-nosed SOB—was a heart filled with compassion for the less fortunate and, quite frankly, a steel-trap mind.

He once held a debate in this Legislature with Patrick Lawlor, one of the members from the NDP, but he held it in Latin, much to the consternation of Hansard, who apparently struggled for quite some time to keep up with what they thought was fractured French.

In 1985, Frank did not seek re-election and was appointed by the Liberal Premier, David Peterson, to be the chairman of the Ontario Racing Commission, a position he held until 1994. What could have been more fitting? Not only was it, I am told, an easy task for the Premier to make that appointment, given Frank's extraordinary record and great capabilities, but it was more than anecdotal to suggest that you would most likely see Frank not just in the trademark overcoat and fedora, but also with the racing form sticking out of one of his pockets, in his years as an MPP.

It should be said that just prior to being appointed Minister of Correctional Services, Frank Drea made it known to the public that he recognized he had a failing

and that he was going to stop drinking. I think it was very typical of Frank's approach to the responsibilities that came with the job he took here at Queen's Park. He made it known in a very public fashion that he was going to stop drinking to set an example for the prisoners and the jail employees he had to visit. Said Frank, "As long as I am minister here, I won't take another drink. I can hardly expect people to be in a rehabilitation program" to make a sacrifice "without a minister who is willing to make a sacrifice, can I?"

That was Frank: someone who, warts and all, was prepared to do whatever it took to fight for the issues in whatever portfolio he served, to fight for his constituents. I have to tell you that right up to the very end, he was considered with great respect and love.

My final chance to see Frank was at our riding association's annual meeting late last fall where he and Jeanne made an appearance. I must say that it had been some time since Frank had made a public appearance. He had been ailing for a number of years. He looked great. He was engaged throughout the whole event and took an active part. It really, really was the highlight of that meeting for all the members of the local riding association to see Frank and to have a chance to have one last chat with him.

He will be missed. He was a mentor, a friend and, I think, a great role model, and someone who has left an indelible mark on this province. We are all in his debt, as we are to those who, like Frank, have served with great distinction in this chamber over the years and have now left us. There's no doubt that Frank Drea truly earned his reputation as "the people's minister."

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): On behalf of the Liberal caucus, I'm pleased and saddened in a way to join the tribute to the late Frank Drea.

In quite a good column, Eric Dowd, the dean of the legislative press gallery, wrote a few weeks ago that Frank represented the kind of character we don't see much around here any more. It is, quite frankly, an interesting question as to whether or not a guy like Frank Drea could (a) get nominated and (b) get elected in this, our very antiseptic age.

As Mr Dowd observed, Frank applied his trade here with other characters like Shulman, Sopha and Sargent. They were quite the parade of angels, I must say.

Mr Gilchrist has observed that there was a time—I'm trying to remember if I was here that night when Pat Lawlor and Frank Drea engaged in a public debate in Latin; I don't doubt that it happened. I knew those two characters well, and I can tell you that they could engage in debates in Latin, English and other things. It may have been the Irish in the two of them.

By the way, the Minister of Finance sits quietly, and to be fair to her, she could probably tell a more complete story about Frank Drea than I could ever tell, because I remember meeting young Janet Ecker in those—

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Finance): You wouldn't want me to talk about your skeletons, Sean.

Mr Conway: No, listen, I remember Janet travelling with Frank in those early years, keeping him organized, which was not an easy task. In fact, I think in one of the obituary articles someone unnamed at, I think, the Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations said, "Ah, Larry Grossman was better organized to be sure, but Frank, ah, Frank, he was better loved."

Frank was an interesting character. As the previous speaker indicated, he was a journalist; he was a press agent for, I think, the Steelworkers; he was at the Telegram, running "Action Line"; and he liked the ponies. In fact, Janet, my lasting image of Frank Drea will always be that jacket. Remember that tweed jacket that Frank wore season in and season out, and you'd see Frank coming to the House, barrelling down the corridor, just outside the chamber door, with that tweed jacket, a scowl on his face, kind of stooped, exceeding the speed limit and the racing form sticking out of one of those pockets. That's my image of Frank.

Frank was a complicated character, I think it was Warren Gerard in the Star article who said he was a man of fire and fallibility, and it is certainly true. Frank fought his demons and in the end succeeded.

Frank did some really interesting things. He banned movies he hadn't seen; the Tin Drum was the movie in question, I think. He was kind of a minister of public morals. I guess it was the Jesuit training. He was going to ban that movie and he hadn't seen it.

Those inmates were in for a surprise. It was margarine, not butter. It was the cheaper tea, not the good coffee. It was weekend snow shovelling, not an easy time watching—

Interjection: Apple juice, not orange juice

Mr Conway: Apple juice, not orange juice. Those were big and important decisions. I want to say to the backbench and the second ministerial tier that those were the days you could go to corrections and make a name for yourself. Frank was in the news. In fact there are some great pictures. Frank went to the cabinet in September 1977, I think. It wasn't very long after you'd see the pictures of Frank standing at the Don Jail hanging on to something.

The other side of Frank Drea, to be fair, Janet, was that in those first few months I think Frank invited the press on New Year's Eve, 1978, to a New Year's Eve party at the Don Jail, because he, Frank Drea, was going to put pay to the gallows at the Don Jail. That was the other side of Frank. Frank was about as un- and anti-bureaucratic as it was possible to be.

I remember one night, Frank—up just behind where Mr Stewart is now sitting—made a famous speech about the need for Supreme Court reform. I remember Bill Davis and, I think, Roy McMurtry joined the debate and were trying to figure out how to slow Frank down. It was quite a speech. Frank wasn't always the whip's best friend.

I was thinking, he was 38 when he was elected and 52 when he retired in 1985. I remember the day David Peterson came to cabinet and said, "Have I got a good

idea for you, my colleagues." I think Frank Miller had appointed him to the municipal board and Petersen had decided on a lateral transfer to the racing commission, where Frank served with distinction and endless and apparent joy for nine years.

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke North): He had a horse named after him, too.

Mr Conway: He had a horse named after him—I'm not surprised.

Someone once said that history is the record of the encounter of character and circumstance. Frank Drea was one hell of an interesting character in often most interesting circumstances. He leaves quite a colourful legacy to his wife and to his family. We extend our condolences.

1440

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): New Democrats join others in this Legislature in paying tribute to Frank Drea and expressing sympathies and condolences to his wife and children, extended family and what I'm sure are hundreds of friends that Drea acquired over the course of many years of being out there in the public.

My first contact with him, I suppose, was back around 1961, when I was a nine-year-old delivering the Toronto Telegram on my paper route down in Welland. I never met Mr Drea until many years later, in the early 1990s, when he was the chair of the Ontario Racing Commission, an appointment that's been referred to that was made in 1985.

I called my predecessor and good friend Mel Swart, who of course served here in this Legislature with Frank Drea. I said, "Mel, what can you tell me about Frank Drea that I can include in these comments today?" Mel said, "Well, Peter, you know he was a hard-assed son of a bitch." I said, "Mel, are you sure?" And I'm sure he said, "You'd better believe it, but I don't think you'd better say that, nor should you say I said it." I said, "Well, Mel, I'm not only going to say it but I'm going to tell people you said it." Quite frankly, Frank Drea referred to himself as a hard-nosed son of a bitch and indeed attributed his first electoral success to that characteristic—perhaps not that quality, but certainly that characteristic.

Reference has been made to Frank Drea taking the pledge, getting on the wagon, no longer indulging. I don't know whether that pledge was made before or after he spoke to a group of Toronto co-op owners believing that they were Niagara grape farmers, which is yet one of the other anecdotal reports of a professional life that was undoubtedly very much on the edge, gutsy—brazen sometimes; no two ways about it.

He was an award-winning journalist who found himself working for the United Steelworkers of America up in Sudbury. Shelley Martel was too young at the time to have any recollection. She was just newly born. I was afraid to ask Elie what his recollection was of Frank Drea working for the Steelworkers for fear that I would have the similar obligation to Elie to report what he said as I felt toward Mel in terms of reporting what Mel's recollections were. The columns and the news covered his

political life and indeed his ongoing public service from 1985 in Welland to the 1990s as chair of the racing commission.

I should mention that when I did finally meet him, as chair of the racing commission, he was of course in his senior years. His hearing had gone, as it does for so many seniors. I recall him wearing a hearing aid, but he had this uncanny ability—and my meeting with him lasted an hour, an hour and a half—that I've witnessed in some others in similar circumstances, to not hear a thing he wasn't interested in hearing, but even the slightest whisper from a corner of the room that involved something that captured his attention would immediately be heard, I'm sure in the largest and loudest of volumes.

He was a truly colourful character, somebody who, when the Telegram folded, didn't go off and join the Toronto Sun. He got himself elected and joined the Legislature. Outstanding amongst the many goals he had was prison reform, and that's a long-time tradition of bold and leading-edge politicians here. Reference has been made to the debate, purportedly in Latin, between Mr Drea and Mr Lawlor. I knew Mr Lawlor much better than I knew Mr Drea. I know Mr Drea by reputation; I knew Mr Lawlor more directly. I'm sure that those who heard the debate believed it was in Latin. But knowing both of those people, one by reputation and one very personally, I suspect it simply may have been the time of day and the after-effects of an engaging dinner.

New Democrats mourn, and join others in mourning, the loss of Frank Drea as a former MPP, an Ontarian and a personality with much colour, a tough-guy image but described as well as having a warm and big heart.

The Speaker: I thank the members and will ensure that their comments go to the family.

ORAL QUESTIONS

SARS

Ms Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): My question is for the Minister of Health. On March 26, the Premier declared SARS a provincial emergency under the emergency planning act. As you know, that declaration gave the province the power to direct and control local governments, facilities and equipment to ensure necessary services are provided. At the time, you said that doing so was necessary to protect the health, safety and welfare of Ontario residents. Premier Eves lifted that emergency on May 18. Minister, given the latest outbreak, why have you not moved the province to the highest state of alert?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I thank the member for the question and I can report to her that a number of the aspects of the infrastructure that one found in the provincial operations centre have been reactivated. Dr Young, for instance, is involved on a daily basis with our review of the situation.

Indeed, a lot of the infrastructure that he and I and Dr D'Cunha—all three of us and in fact the people of Ontario—relied upon has been activated over the past week.

There are a couple of things that are different this time around. First, we did not have directives and protocols in place at the time, but we do have them in place now. Second, this Legislature had not passed Bill 1 at the time, and we have passed it now. That certainly gives us, we believe, enough room to do the right thing and ensure the people of Ontario are protected.

Ms Pupatello: We have a copy now of your “new normal” directives. You probably have a copy as well, and I'm sure you know what they say. They say that hospitals that don't currently have SARS aren't required to screen visitors, staff or even potential patients for SARS until after they are admitted. On page 6, “Visitors entering the facilities are expected to have self-screened based on signage posted at the hospital.” It goes on to say, “Staff, patient and visitor screening is not required except as stated below.”

Minister, the “new normal” is now becoming just a slogan. As far as screening for SARS at hospitals is concerned, you've implemented the old status quo. Why have you let your guard down in this regard?

Hon Mr Clement: The honourable member should know that is not the case. There has been a constant stream of conversation and directives since the most recent flare-up has occurred, over and above the “new normal” directives, so what she is suggesting is not accurate.

Ms Pupatello: We have the dates of the directives listed, and we have a list of all the directives as they've been issued from your office.

When Ernie Eves dropped the medical emergency, the provincial operations centre, which was the centre for quarterbacking the province's SARS effort, was directed to scale back their efforts. They were, for example, no longer monitoring patient transfers. One of the health professionals we spoke with this morning, one who had been working with the provincial operations centre, said that it wasn't just scaled down, it was all but shut down. Their function was turned over to the Ministry of Health.

Who directed the provincial operations centre to scale back their work on SARS? Is it now up and operational again, and if it isn't, what will it take for it to be up and operational again?

Hon Mr Clement: There is a minor granule of truth in your question, but the truth is that all those operations you speak of were moved to the Finch Avenue site of the Ministry of Health. They still exist. They still are tracking in the health care system. That has been powered up, of course, since the knowledge of the new outbreak has occurred. It would be wrong to suggest there is no provincial coordination. It would be wrong to suggest we have powered down. It would be wrong to suggest we don't have the best and the brightest minds in the province working on the situation. So I hope that gives you some comfort.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): New question?

Ms Papatello: On April 29—that would be well after the first outbreak of SARS—Ernie Eves promised, “Six mobile rapid-response teams will be created to deal with outbreaks of SARS.” We’re presuming that means other outbreaks, not the first one. What is the status of those mobile rapid-response teams, and how are they helping us deal with these latest outbreaks?

Hon Mr Clement: The teams exist, and pursuant to the determination of both the local medical officers of health and also of course through the provincial medical officer of health, they can be used on an as-necessary basis.

Ms Papatello: It’s interesting that we cannot find anyone to tell us anything about these mobile rapid-response teams. No one knows where they are or what they are doing, if they in fact exist. They were announced on April 29 by the Premier, and so far we can’t find them. You called this a priority. You said it would be done and it hasn’t.

1450

Let me read from the press release of exactly one month ago: “A priority is to reinforce the public health care system to continue the battle against SARS. The province will immediately expand staffing in public health surveillance, epidemiology and laboratory areas. Six mobile rapid-response teams will be created to deal with outbreaks of SARS.” Not only did you scale back the provincial operations centre, you’ve got hospitals now that don’t screen for SARS. And after all that, you didn’t keep your promise to communities for the rapid-response teams. When are we going to get our act together and get this thing under control?

Hon Mr Clement: Let me correct the honourable member again. I did indicate that we do have the infrastructure in place, including many of the aspects of the POC that she was so concerned about in her initial question. I do wish to inform her again that the SWAT teams do exist and that they were put into use. We were having a discussion with the director of infectious disease control in the city of Toronto, where she indicated to us that they were being put to use in various aspects of Toronto’s challenges. The fact of the matter is, the honourable member is wrong in her insinuations.

Ms Papatello: We don’t have to tell you or this House how dangerous a disease SARS is. It will take a co-operative effort of all three levels of government. Minister, you know full well that this House has been more than co-operative. We’ve assisted in the quick passage of legislation to deal with SARS. From the beginning, we’ve worked with you to push the federal government for assistance as well. What we need to do our jobs is information, and that is information that is becoming extremely difficult to obtain.

Back in April, James Young travelled to Washington to answer questions from a US Senate committee. We think that perhaps we should have that same opportunity. Will you agree right now in this House to make these individuals, Dr James Young and Dr Colin D’Cunha, available to a committee of this House in this next week,

available to members of this House to ask very pertinent and detailed questions about the status of our battle against SARS?

Hon Mr Clement: Let me answer that in two parts. First of all, I’m glad the honourable member raised the issue of how her party and her leader wants to help us make sure that the federal government gives its responsibility. I have a letter addressed to the Prime Minister that could be signed by Dalton McGuinty, asking the Prime Minister to help us deal with the SARS situation. If a page could come over here, I would like Mr McGuinty to sign this letter. Please make sure he signs the letter.

I would like to quote from Mr McGuinty this morning at CFRB where he said, “I don’t think there’s a lot to be gained in finger-pointing in terms of what happened with the second outbreak.” I agree with Dalton McGuinty. Why don’t you?

Ms Papatello: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: It’s very important that you know that my leader sent a letter a month and a half ago.

The Speaker: I’m afraid we can’t get into that debate.

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Energy.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. The leader of the third party has the floor.

Mr Hampton: Today, the independent market operator confirmed once again that southern Ontario faces a real risk of electricity brownouts and blackouts this summer. Clearly, your hydro privatization and deregulation scheme isn’t working. Despite your repeated promises, Pickering A generating station won’t be generating any electricity until at least August. The Bruce station—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Sorry to interrupt. If I get up again I’m throwing people out. Sorry for the interruption, but I want it to be quiet for him. I hate to interrupt him like that but I had to do it. Sorry about that.

Mr Hampton: The Bruce is also delayed, and because of deregulation, it means that if there’s a hydroelectricity shortage the price goes through the roof and so do people’s hydroelectricity bills. Minister, will you end hydro privatization and deregulation and will you adopt an energy efficiency strategy that brings some stability to Ontario’s hydro supply.

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs): I read with great interest the update that the independent market operator provided to the province of Ontario. It was not today, it was last week, if the member opposite had seen it. I don’t think his conclusions with respect to the contents of the report are fair or accurate, which is not something uncommon for this member.

Let’s look at the president and chief executive officer of the independent market operator, Dave Goulding, and what he said in recent months: “Had the market not

opened in May 2002, I believe the supply situation over the summer months would have been worse."

Mr Hampton: Well, you should read the report from the IMO, because not only do they say that you're going to be lucky to get these generating stations by later on in the summer, they say there's some risk that they might not even come back then. Instead of admitting how wrong your privatization and deregulation scheme has been, what are you going to try to do? You're going to try to cover it up by putting dirty diesel generators in people's neighbourhoods.

Minister, you have choices. California implemented—after they went down the deregulation road, and it blew up in their face—an electricity efficiency strategy. They were able to save, during their peak summer months, a substantial amount of electricity. Why won't you do that instead of operating dirty diesel generators in people's neighbourhoods?

Hon Mr Baird: The Minister of Health pointed out some of the fallacy in the questions that the member opposite gave this House yesterday, and I'll do the same today.

It is not the case. He's going around spreading things which are not, in fact, the truth. I would indicate to him in the strongest of terms—

The Speaker: I'm afraid the minister is going to have to withdraw that, please.

Hon Mr Baird: I withdraw that, Mr Speaker. I said that what he's saying is not true. I'm not saying that he's deliberately doing it.

The member opposite is going around saying that we'll be putting dirty diesel generators in residential neighbourhoods when he knows that is not the case.

Mr Hampton: If they were natural gas generators, as this minister claims, we would see some natural gas pipe being laid. We'd see some gas metering equipment being put in. That's not happening anywhere, so it's very clear, by default, that it's dirty diesel generation, and you, Minister, after all your flip-flops and denials, should stop trying to fool people. That's what it comes down to.

But you've got options. You could bring in the 2020 plan that California utilized to lower their electricity demand during the peak summer. You could bring in a Home Green Up plan. You could bring in a plan with low-interest loans to replace those older refrigerators that use 900 kilowatt hours of electricity each year with newer refrigerators that use 200 kilowatt hours of electricity each year. All of those are practical solutions. Will you do those things rather than forcing dirty diesel generators on to residential neighbourhoods.

Hon Mr Baird: The member opposite held a press conference in this place some time in the past week lauding California as an example for Ontario, saying that we had only had about 3,200 appliances purchased under our appliance tax rebate initiative. That of course was proven to be wrong; it was 45,000.

We're introducing a number of measures to encourage more green power. I can tell the member opposite that since last summer, we have a lot of new green power

that's come on line. Since last summer, 800 megawatts at Bruce B is back on line. We've got a new commercial wind farm in Kincardine. We've got a new clean natural gas plant in TransAlta. We'll have substantial nuclear capacity coming on line beginning next month.

The member opposite wants to raise the debate with respect to diesel power generators. Would he be willing to bet me a month's salary that we wouldn't have an diesel generators in the province?

Mr Hampton: With your record, Minister, any time.

Hon Mr Baird: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to say to the leader of the third party that the bet's on.

1500

DISEASE REPORTING

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question to the Minister of Health—I want to review the definition game.

I want to review with you that the World Health Organization says you've been playing with the number of SARS cases in Ontario. But I want to go back to nine months ago, when West Nile was starting to cause illness in Ontario.

On August 30 last year, your government announced the first three probable cases of West Nile, but in the days leading up to that announcement, Dr Neil Rau was pleading with you to admit that there were many more West Nile cases. He warned you that you were under-reporting the number of West Nile cases. You didn't heed his warnings. People went on suspecting they were all right. Later that summer, many people became ill and some people died.

Now we fast-forward to the last few days, and what do we find? The World Health Organization says that once again you're playing with definitions and classifications and under-reporting the number of cases of SARS. Why would you do that, Minister?

Mr Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Mr Speaker, I don't know what he's talking about. The fact of the matter is, we report according to Health Canada standards, and if Health Canada wants to have a definitional discussion with WHO, it's their right and capacity to do so.

I want to assure you and, through you, the people of Ontario that whether you're a probable case of SARS or a suspected case of SARS, we treat you the same way, which is in fact at the highest clinical expertise to make sure that if you're sick, you get better.

Mr Hampton: Minister, when the WHO has to phone officials in Ontario and say to them, and when Dr Donald Low says very publicly, that the effect of your game of semantics and definitions is to under-report the number of cases of SARS, I think you've got a serious problem. And do you know what? I think the people of Ontario know you've got a serious problem.

What's worse, this is exactly what you did with West Nile. A recent study from the Canadian Medical Associa-

tion Journal shows that while you were telling people, "Oh, we've only got so many cases of West Nile," in fact there were many, many more cases and a lot of people died.

Why, after the episode you went through with West Nile last summer of under-reporting the number of cases, when medical experts told you you were under-reporting them, are you engaged in the same game of under-reporting through semantics and definitions now?

Hon Mr Clement: Again, let me put it on record. We will use whatever definition Health Canada and the WHO arrive at. WHO has told us, and told me directly—I don't know when was the last time you talked to an official at WHO, but I've talked to them directly this week. They said they admire Ontario's transparency, they admire our competency in sending them data real-time, and they wanted to thank us for it. That was Dr Heymann, who is in charge of infectious disease control for the World Health Organization.

As for the West Nile virus, I can only say to the honourable member that as soon as we had information and as soon as it went through the double-testing protocol, which was the protocol of Health Canada when it came to West Nile virus, we posted it on our Internet site. Everyone else knew that. Why didn't you?

EDUCATION LABOUR DISPUTE

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): I have a question for the Minister of Education. Here in the gallery are Murielle Boudreau, a parent with two of her children, Olivia and Sophie, who are 12 and eight; Joanne Kular with Eric and Laura, who are 11 and nine; and Ruth Poulin with her children, Rebecca and Christopher.

Minister, they're here because they know there is nothing in your bill concerning the Toronto Catholic lockout of them and thousands of others that will benefit them, frankly, distinct from our bill or the proposal the teachers made yesterday to send everything to arbitration and put the kids back in school immediately. They know you have the power to have kids back in school immediately and yet you refuse to do so. You would rather make these kids and thousands of others hostage to your political agenda that will damage learning conditions and teacher relations.

I want to ask you on behalf of them, will you change your position, will you stop disrupting their lives, and will you agree to help have kids go back to school immediately? Will you do that, Minister?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Deputy Premier, Minister of Education): The member opposite continues to be mistaken. The only people who are holding up the return of the students to the classroom are the Liberals and the NDP, who refuse to pass our legislation.

Mr Kennedy: It is exceedingly disrespectful for the minister, in the face of these parents—and I challenge her now to produce here in this House, outside of this House, in any place, one benefit for these children, one benefit

from perpetuating your bill and not passing our peaceful solution or encouraging the board to take things to arbitration. Minister, there are no benefits. There are no benefits for these kids. It is 690,000 days you have cost the kids in the Catholic board in Toronto, for your political agenda. You've run expensive ads. You brought in a bill with a poisoned pill in it. You have done things that no government has dared to do with the education of children.

Minister, you deserve to give all these kids an explanation. You cannot claim one benefit for these kids. Minister, I want to ask you again, why are you against a peaceful solution to put these kids back in the classrooms tomorrow?

Hon Mrs Witmer: We have a lot of concern for the students and for the parents; in fact, we believe that these students and these parents are entitled to receive report cards with marks, with comments. What do you have against them getting those? We care about meetings with parents. We care about co-op placements. We care about graduation activities. Unfortunately, the members opposite have demonstrated they don't really care for the kids.

I would ask for unanimous consent right now to pass the bill.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The minister has asked for unanimous consent. Is there unanimous consent? I'm afraid I heard a no.

SEX OFFENDERS

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): I stand here in the House today as Toronto continues to mourn the loss of a child. Holly Jones was abducted from her neighbourhood and her precious life was cut off far too short.

My question is for the Minister of Public Safety and Security. What is this government doing when it comes to protecting Ontario's citizens from sex offenders?

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Minister of Public Safety and Security): I want to thank my colleague for her question and to offer, I'm sure on behalf of all members of the assembly, our sincerest condolences to Holly's family and friends.

The people of Ontario have the right to be protected from sexual predators. The Ontario Sex Offender Registry provides police services with a valuable tool to investigate not only sexual offences but other unspeakable crimes. To date, the registry is comprised of 16 officers and has an annual budget of \$4 million. I am encouraged by the fact the registry has a compliance rate of over 92%.

We're proud to be the first jurisdiction in Canada to take action against the serious threat of sex offenders, but we cannot be the only jurisdiction. For the past two years, we have repeatedly called on the federal government to implement a national sex offender registry that would provide a seamless system Canada-wide. A national sex offender registry, without the changes that would reflect the components of the Ontario registry,

would not be helpful, and we encourage the federal government—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The minister's time is up.

Ms Mushinski: Thank you for that response, Minister. You and I both know that we've had some serious discussions, and surely more can be done. I believe it's clear that Ontario has taken this matter very seriously. We have passed the laws to reinforce people's intolerance for sexual predators.

Minister, I would ask that you inform this House of what more we can do as a government to protect our children.

Hon Mr Runciman: I think what we can do as an assembly, let alone as a government, is to send a clear, unified message that the protection of children in this country should be a priority for the national Liberal government. That is certainly not the case to date when we see their priority being the decriminalization of marijuana.

We need a national sex offender registry. I don't think there's any question about that. If you take a look at the sex offender registry legislation that's currently in committee at the federal level—we have the head of the registry in Ontario appearing before that committee today—it's difficult to believe: as just one component of this, they are missing personal identifiers. There are all sorts of omissions from this legislation that will make it virtually useless in terms of assisting police services across this province.

In terms of protecting children, we can see an expansion of the DNA legislation, which is sorely needed. It's hard to believe, but under the federal legislation you have to be a repeat offender to qualify for a DNA sample.

The Speaker: The minister's time is up.

1510

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): This question is for the Minister of Energy, and it is about this latest IMO report. I find the findings of the IMO to be quite serious.

The hydro levels are going to be compromised, not just because of the season but because the rivers are lower than usual. There is going to be a reduction in nuclear production because of the changes to the weather, yes, but even lower than usual. We also know that even though at Pickering A the first reactor was supposed to be up and running over three years and \$2.5 billion ago, it's still not up and running. All this, and the IMO says there will be a reduction in available resources. I would have thought this was pretty serious.

The minister's response is to enter into a wager with Mr Hampton over what might happen over the summer. It's time for this government to stop rolling the dice when it comes to the future of Ontario's electricity and tell us whether or not, as a province, we need to prepare ourselves for brownouts and blackouts over the course of the summer months.

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs): Like the member opposite, I take the report of the independent market operator tremendously seriously. I don't share his characterization of the content of the report. The IMO speaks not of a reduction of the electricity we had last summer, but rather of an increase. We'll have more than 800 megawatts of clean fuel available from Bruce B that wasn't available last summer. That's 800 megawatts more than's available today. We have the first commercial wind farm in Ontario, producing enough electricity for 3,000 homes. That is available today and wasn't available last summer. We have 500 megawatts at Sarnia through the clean natural gas TransAlta facility. As early as next month, we'll have 750 megawatts of clean electricity being generated at Kincardine, in addition to the substantial increases we expect to see in July.

Mr Bryant: Would you seriously have us believe that we don't have a supply problem in the province? Is that what you're saying?

Interjection.

Mr Bryant: I hear "yes" from the government benches, and I can't wait to hear what the Minister of Energy has to say.

Pickering A was supposed to be up and running not just in July—and it's not going to be fully operational in July—and not just at the end of this quarter; it was three years ago that we were supposed to be getting this power, and we still haven't. So your assurances as to when this is going to happen are really cold comfort to everybody. The fact you're wagering over it gives me some trouble under the circumstances, when the gamble to date has been one that has been paid for by Ontario taxpayers.

It was just last March that you said we have in the province of Ontario "an oversupply of electricity." Is it really your position that we have an oversupply of electricity in Ontario?

Hon Mr Baird: I find the member opposite's use of that quote to be rather offensive. If he looks at the context in which I made it, I was speaking with respect to—

Interjections.

Hon Mr Baird: The members might want to listen.

What I was speaking of was the time of use. We have a huge overcapacity 12 hours a day and on the weekends. If we can take some measures to shift the load, as has been done with many industrial and corporate users, if we can go to time-of-use meters, we could make better use of the electricity we have available. So the quote he uses is not accurate and the member opposite knows that.

I said in the substantive part of my earlier answer that I consider the IMO's report very important, and the concerns they address with respect to supply. I am very pleased there's a substantial amount of new power online that wasn't available last summer, and we're all working very hard to ensure that any new electricity—clean, non-emission electricity—is brought safely to the people of the province of Ontario.

MANDATORY RETIREMENT

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): My question is for the Minister of Citizenship. The recent throne speech outlined our government's proposal to eliminate mandatory retirement in Ontario at age 65. Today we followed through on our promise, and I know you introduced the Mandatory Retirement Elimination Act, 2003, a piece of legislation that represents a major step forward in strengthening Ontario's human rights protection for all seniors.

Minister, I wonder if you could elaborate on why you've introduced this bill at this time.

Hon Carl DeFaria (Minister of Citizenship, minister responsible for seniors): I thank my colleague for the question. Ontario is a long-standing leader in the protection of human rights and opportunities. Our government has listened to the Ontario Human Rights Commission and recognized that the time has come to strengthen the Ontario Human Rights Code to better protect older workers.

Second, Ontario needs to retain skilled workers to strengthen our economy. The number of skilled workers is not keeping pace with key growth sectors. Older workers can help meet these demands by staying active in the labour market. Our government is looking at eliminating mandatory retirement now because we believe it promotes fairness, personal choice and the dignity of older persons. It's the right thing to do. The freedom to choose should belong to everyone, regardless of age. Older workers make significant contributions to this province, and we believe—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The minister's time is up.

Mr Gilchrist: Thank you, Minister, for those extra details. There certainly has been a lot of interest about this aspect of the throne speech since it was first announced. I think most members in this House—certainly some of them are already over age 65 and many of the rest of us have parents over that age. So there's no argument that there are vast numbers of people who are directly affected by what's in this bill.

Minister, when or if this bill is passed, subject to the Legislature, what will it mean for the people of the province of Ontario?

Hon Mr DeFaria: As I said, it is the right thing to do. It is the fair thing to do. Retirement should be all about choice. We have recognized the need for choice in deciding whether or not to continue working past 65. This bill would put choice back into the hands of individuals. They should be able to choose when to retire based on their own circumstances, goals and interests. Our government believes that, with people living longer and healthier lives, it is unfair to insist that they retire at age 65. Forcing retirement at age 65 can create financial hardship for certain groups, including parents who earlier in their lives decided to stay home to raise their children. As well, many, as recent immigrants, may not have had an opportunity to contribute to their pension plan. It's a

real shame that some in opposition have voted against this bill—

The Speaker: I'm afraid the minister's time is up.

CHILD CARE

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a question to the Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services. In June the city of Toronto is going to be forced to cut another 500 subsidized child care spaces. This is a direct result of your inadequate funding of high quality child care. Your government is supposed to pick up 80% of the cost of Toronto's subsidized child care spaces. But your government has capped the contribution, leaving the city of Toronto \$32 million short to pay for these spaces. Last year this cap cost Toronto families 1,600 subsidized spaces. This year your government is cutting 200 Ontario Works spaces in Toronto, and the cap will cost another 500 subsidized child care spaces.

Minister, to date you have received over \$468 million from the federal government for early childhood development initiatives. Why don't you use some of this federal money to save these 500 spaces?

Hon Brenda Elliott (Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services): I find it interesting to receive a question from the opposition that starts out talking about child care and ends up talking about early childhood development. What I have said time and time again—and the members from the third party don't seem to understand this—is that there's more, much more to early childhood development than just child care.

Having said that, this government understands that good child care is important to the people of Ontario. That's why we invest \$700 million in two programs in direct help to parents with their child care needs through our budget and \$200 million in direct assistance to low- and middle-income families in a program to assist them.

1520

We know that child care is important. That's why, when the federal Liberals came forward with a national child care plan after many, many years of empty promises, Ontario worked with them and with other provinces and territories and agreed to sign on. We'll receive \$9.65 million this year, and when it comes, it will represent just over 1% of what we're presently spending.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I'm afraid the minister's time is up.

Ms Martel: Minister, the reason I link high-quality regulated child care with early childhood development is because Dr Fraser Mustard and the Honourable Margaret McCain have told you in two reports that early childhood development requires high-quality child care, and if you would read those two reports, even you would understand that.

Look, the problem is that because of your inadequate funding, the city of Toronto is going to lose 500 child care spaces. The city of Toronto already has 15,000 families on a waiting list for child care. Your inadequate funding is going to make that situation even worse.

Why don't you look at our public power plan, which talks about \$10-a-day child care in regulated spaces and the creation of 20,000 new spaces in non-profit centres? Minister, why don't you do the right thing? Invest in our plan, save those spaces and build new subsidized spaces here in the city of Toronto?

Hon Mrs Elliott: Let's be very clear. The Eves government understands that affordable quality child care is very important to the people of Ontario. We understand that good child care is essential to our economic growth. But the big difference between the Liberals and the NDP across the way and the Conservative government is that our government believes parents are in the right position to make the best choices for their children. We believe it is the right thing to fund a number of options to offer to parents to make sure they can choose the kind of quality child care that suits their families and their needs. We recognize that different families have different needs, so that's why we believe a one-size-fits-all child care policy does not work.

Now I want to return to the beginning of the question when the member opposite asked me about child care in Toronto. I just happened to notice an ad in the Toronto paper sponsored by Toronto Children's Services. The title is, "Are You Eligible for a Child Care Subsidy? You Just Might be Surprised." There's a number here to call. Obviously, if child care is in such short supply—

The Speaker: I'm afraid the minister's time is up.

FINANCIAL SERVICES COMMISSION OF ONTARIO

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): My question is to the Minister of Finance. I believe she's hiding back there. It's OK.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): She's right here. Continue.

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Culture): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: It's improper for the member to refer to a minister as hiding someplace. That was very improper when he could clearly see her.

The Speaker: If you're going to say these things, it's very difficult to keep it—members are in and out. I ask all members to think before they say things.

I'm going to give you a little bit of leeway on the time, but you're going to have to be quick because you've wasted a lot of time.

Mr Parsons: Thank you, Speaker. I withdraw that.

Minister, you're responsible for the financial activity and well-being of provincially chartered insurance companies. Pilot Insurance is the largest insurance company that is provincially chartered and regulated by the Financial Services Commission of Ontario.

It has just come to light that, beginning in 1997, Pilot inappropriately transferred money from its prior-years claim reserves and recorded the money as income. I believe that Enron perfected this type of accounting. The

money and property transferred is approximately \$195 million.

The law requires that this money be held in trust to satisfy pending claims. This puts both policyholders and shareholders at risk. It appears that Pilot has been able to replace this money, which perhaps partially explains the massive insurance increases consumers are experiencing.

This mishandling of funds was never discovered by the financial services commission, for which you are responsible. I find it interesting that they never made public the inappropriate actions by Pilot Insurance.

Minister, you and your government are clearly not doing your job to protect our citizens from the insurance companies. I ask you now what you will do to ensure that every insurance policyholder—

The Speaker: I'm afraid the member's time is up. Minister?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Finance): The regulator is indeed on this case. If inappropriate steps have been taken, there are penalties for that, and we will ensure that they are implemented.

Mr Parsons: You're also only too aware that the Participating Co-operatives of Ontario Trusteed Pension Plan is in dire straits. Senior citizens who faithfully contributed to the plan are now seeing their pensions cut in half and are literally trying to live on several hundred dollars a month. The plan is in trouble because the assets are now only 53% of the amount needed to sustain it. Here again, the Financial Services Commission of Ontario had the responsibility of monitoring the health of the pension plan. The loss in assets did not happen overnight, but they sat back and watched. Where were they? Where was the financial services commission? Minister, I ask you what you'll do now to ensure that every pension plan member in Ontario can have confidence that their retirement income is safe.

Hon Mrs Ecker: Again the honourable member is wrong in his facts. The financial regulator has indeed been on the case with the co-op pension. They had been working with the board when it was clear that because of the reporting requirements that in are the law, there were problems in the plan. The board was attempting to resolve that. It is the board's decision. They said they wanted to wind it up. We are working with both the pensioners and the board to see what can be done for these pensioners. For example, approximately half of the pensioners are going to be covered in another plan. There are many steps that we are taking to ensure that those pensioners indeed receive what they can get.

I think that having secure pensions is something we all hope to have. The plan under which the co-op worked was put in place to actually expand pension benefits for many, many workers who wouldn't ordinarily have had them. We have put in place strong rules. There are strong reporting requirements. There are also reporting requirements for employers to top up the defined pension plans.

I think the regulator has been on the case and will continue to be on the case to ensure that pensioners get what they deserve.

WEST NILE VIRUS

Mr AL McDonald (Nipissing): I'd like to direct my question to the Minister of Health. As you are aware, many people are feeling uneasy about the presence of West Nile virus across the province. For several weeks now, tension has been building about the potential dangers of this disease and what can be done to contain it. In fact, many of my constituents in Nipissing have expressed concerns to me about what we're doing to protect them from the West Nile virus. I know that you've been working with our public health officials to develop a plan to minimize the risks posed by this virus. In fact, I understand that the Premier recently made a significant announcement. Could you please ease the minds of my constituents and all Ontarians by explaining the significance of this announcement?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I'd like to thank the honourable member for his question and of course assure him that this government is taking the necessary steps to protect the public from the West Nile virus.

A key part of Premier Eves's announcement is that we're committing \$20 million this year to pay for 100% of the larviciding costs and 50% of the costs of application. That's the kind of leadership we're showing and that the Premier is showing. This brings our West Nile virus spending to combat the disease to \$33 million this year in total, which is part of our commitment to spend \$100 million over the next five years.

The member should know that the Pest Management Regulatory Agency of Health Canada tests and registers all larvicides used across the country, as does our own Ministry of the Environment. Applicators are required to be trained and licensed by the MOE, and all communities must receive notice from their local public health units before pellets are dropped. In fact, I was happy to receive a letter from the association of municipalities supporting our announcement.

Mr McDonald: I'm happy to hear that you've received support for this great announcement. I want to ensure that the people of Nipissing know about the rest of the comprehensive plan that we've laid out for dealing with this disease. Provincial standards for larviciding is only one of the initiatives to fight West Nile, and I understand that we've unveiled our made-in-Ontario lab, which you just announced this month. Could you elaborate on the details of this made-in-Ontario solution to expanding laboratory testing, and could you also describe some of our other forward-moving steps to combat the West Nile virus in Ontario?

Hon Mr Clement: I will try to accommodate the honourable member in the minute that I have. Certainly, earlier this month I did announce that testing for West Nile virus can now be done right here in Ontario. Over the last few months, Ontario's Central Public Health Laboratory has expanded its capacity so that waiting times are significantly reduced on the testing. We'll have a quick turnaround of three days now, and this means that

health care professionals will have the information they need very quickly for their patients.

1530

This is part of our seven-point plan for the West Nile virus attack. We launched our public education campaign and sent brochures to every household in Ontario. Our new early warning system will better track human cases. Local public health units are already in the field tracking infected birds. A study is almost done to determine how many people were exposed to West Nile virus last year, and research continues to be done to combat the disease in our midst.

That is the kind of leadership that this government is showing. Our seven-point plan is state-of-the-art and is the best in Canada, and we are doing everything we can to ensure that people have the best protection possible against the West Nile virus.

INSURANCE RATES

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): My question is to the Minister of Finance. There is a horrible problem in this province with skyrocketing insurance rates. Homeowners, small businesses, charitable organizations and drivers are being forced to pay unbelievable premiums. In fact, they are held to ransom by insurance companies across the province.

Homeowners are being told they have to make major improvements to their homes or their insurance will be cut off. Small business owners are facing massive increases in their liability insurance for no apparent reason, even though they haven't had a claim in 20 years. In my own riding, one small business is facing a 400% increase in liability insurance. Drivers with otherwise good records are facing cancellation or massive increases. Seniors' discounts are being eliminated without reason and their insurance rates are doubling.

These skyrocketing manoeuvres and increases are unprecedented in this province. People are asking, "Why do we, the citizens of Ontario, the consumers, have to pay for the stock market losses of multi-million dollar insurance companies?"

Why is your minister sitting on his hands, doing nothing to stop these—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I'm afraid the member's time is up. Minister?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Finance): As you know, the insurance industry in all sectors is under considerable pressure around the world. All we have to do is look at some of the crises and acts of destruction that have occurred to know some of the reasons for that.

That's one of the reasons the regulator has been working very closely with insurance companies, first of all, to make sure that nothing inappropriate is occurring, that appropriate rules are being observed. In auto insurance, for example, we've had considerable consultations with consumers and with all of those involved in the auto insurance area, including health practitioners and those who advocate on behalf of auto victims. We are putting

in place changes which will help moderate those increases and ensure that consumers have the information they need to make appropriate choices when they're shopping around for the best consumer rates.

Mr Colle: Madam Minister, you're just making the same excuses these insurance companies are making. There is no way of defending the cancellation of insurance on people who are trying to buy a home or complete a deal. That's what is going on. People are told to rewire their whole house or they won't have insurance. Seniors' insurance premiums are doubling. How can you stand there and say this is acceptable? Your job is to protect Ontario citizens, not to give excuses like 9/11 for their gouging of citizens in Ontario.

Stand up again and tell us why the citizens of Ontario have to basically pay on their backs the gambling losses that these insurance companies had on the stock market. How do you justify the insurance companies gouging these Ontario consumers?

Hon Mrs Ecker: If the honourable member really knew something about the insurance industry, he would know that around the world there are challenges for those who are seeking to buy insurance in any number of sectors. It is certainly not something that is limited to here in Ontario. He's quite right: consumers are experiencing significant increases in many areas. That is why the regulator has increased its diligence to ensure that rules are being observed.

Secondly, we've been working with the auto insurance industry, with consumers and with those who advocate on behalf of consumers to put in place changes that will help on the auto insurance side to give consumers more choices, better access to treatment, faster access to treatment, expanded rights to sue. All of those are important benefits for consumers as we seek to make sure that consumers here in Ontario can continue to be covered by insurance.

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): My question is for the Associate Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation. This government has demonstrated a strong commitment to small business and entrepreneurship. In fact, small business and the entrepreneurs of Ontario have helped us to create over 1.1 million net new jobs since 1995, a record envied around the world. One of the cornerstones of this government's commitment to the small business sector is the funding of the province's small business enterprise centres. Could the minister take a moment to tell the members of the House about some of the important functions and features of these centres?

Hon David Turnbull (Associate Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation): I thank the member from Niagara Falls for this important question. The Eves government recognizes that small businesses are the engine of economic growth in this province. In fact, they're critical to ensuring that prosperity continues in this province.

Ontario's small business enterprise centres help meet the needs of small businesses. We have a total of 44 locations to meet the needs of small businesses. These are 34 enterprise centres and 10 self-help offices. They provide information, one-on-one consulting, workshops, seminars and on-line training. They also provide access to the latest technology for research and planning. Last year we spent some \$3 million on these centres, and our plans for this year include the conversion of five additional centres to enterprise centres, 15 to 20 bridges to better business events, and continuation of the young entrepreneurs strategy.

Mr Maves: Minister, you mentioned at the end of your response that a critical part of our small business strategy is the young entrepreneurs strategy, for which you and I no longer qualify. However, I feel this program is of great benefit to the young people of our province. I know the strategy encompasses a number of individual programs aimed at mentoring and providing financial support to enterprising youth. Could you detail some of the components of this critical new initiative for the members of the House?

Hon Mr Turnbull: Our government's young entrepreneurs strategy instills the entrepreneurial spirit in youth. They highlight career benefits and they demonstrate entrepreneurship as a desirable career path; in fact, you could say a critical career path. They provide financial assistance to enterprising young people. The My Company program provides business training and low-interest loans up to \$15,000. The Summer Company provides mentoring, hands-on training and awards up to \$3,000.

Our government's young entrepreneurs strategy fosters entrepreneurial initiative. It encourages young people to harness ambition and pursue their dreams. These are critical elements in building this economy.

GO TRANSIT

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Last March you asked the GO Transit board to delay a decision to cancel the reduced fare they offer to students. The students said, at least in that instance, that you did the right thing. But now the students are worried the proposal is coming back. Getting rid of the student fare could cost students from Oshawa as much as \$86 a month. Minister are you willing to call the GO Transit chair, Gordon Chong, and tell him to keep the student fare in place?

Hon Frank Klees (Minister of Transportation): I thank the member for his question. As the member knows well, I directed GO Transit to hold off on the implementation of that policy. I did so requesting at the time that they consult with stakeholders and that they take a second look at this issue. I have an undertaking from the GO Transit board that they in fact will do that and are doing that. I expect to hear from them when those consultations are complete.

1540

At the end of the day, what's important is that there are competitive rates, that in fact the rates are set in such a way that we encourage ridership, particularly by the student population. That was my direction to the board, and I expect that in fact will have a favourable response. We'll wait to see what happens.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Supplementary, the member for Beaches-East York.

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): Minister, what you did last March was right, and one could not argue with what you're saying here today. But the GO Transit bureaucrats have written reports and have suggested that the student rates are going to go up by as much as \$86. This would be a huge tax on the students who live in the 905 and who must commute to schools within the 905 and into Toronto. We believe that students should be getting a preferential rate, as you once said yourself. We believe that GO should be funded so it doesn't have to look for sources of revenue from people who cannot afford to pay for it. We have suggested that ourselves in our own election documents. We have said as much. That needs to be done. What is your plan to make sure that these students will not have to pay increased rates to get to school?

Hon Mr Klees: As I said, and I'll repeat this, the reason I gave instruction to the GO Transit board not to introduce that rate increase as it was proposed is that I wanted them to take a second look at that. We believe it's extremely important that we make ridership affordable not only to students but across the board.

On the same count, the GO Transit board and their bureaucrats who are submitting their financial reports have a responsibility to be financially responsible as well. So what we're trying to do is find that balance. That's what I would say to you is our responsibility, and that is what we'll achieve together in co-operation.

Those bureaucrats have a responsibility. They've submitted a proposal. I'm sure the board will look at it and at the end of the day they'll make what is a fair and reasonable decision.

GOVERNMENT ASSETS

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): My question is to the Minister of Finance. The need for this was heightened yesterday when we heard that there is about \$850 million of SARS spending required; there's another \$700 million in cuts required in the budget. We demand to know what you are planning to sell to raise the \$2.2 billion as a result of asset sales. You have said that you are going to raise that by commercializing government enterprises.

We've got the major assets of the province of Ontario here to try to get some idea of where you're going to get the \$2.2 billion. The major income of these enterprises happens to be with the LCBO. I'll ask you directly, Minister: is the LCBO on the block as the way you're going to raise the \$2.2 billion?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Finance): As the honourable member will well know, that particular line in the budget has had different kinds of levels in it. Many times there are other sales and rentals that happen in the normal course of things in a government. That number has varied from year to year, so that is not unusual.

We have set out quite clearly, as we have before and again this year, what public assets the government owns and maintains on behalf of taxpayers. We review that and we ask: can they be better managed in some other fashion? Is it something the government needs to do? Is it something the private sector can do? We make decisions around that. As he well knows, there were assets reviewed last year. Some were changed; we divested ourselves of some; some we are retaining in public control. That is no different than it'll be this year.

Mr Phillips: The public should be aware that the line does vary. The day the last provincial election was called, the government sold the 407. The 407 users have gotten ripped off every single day since then. That's why we are raising this and that's why we are so insistent that you owe the people of the province an answer. You have balanced the books by saying you're going to sell \$2.2 billion in assets. The last time you did this was the 407 rip-off. The public has an entire right to know what you are going to sell. Again, we say to you today, Minister: \$850 million for SARS yesterday; another \$750 million you've said you're going to cut out of the budget. Where are you going to get the \$2.2 billion? Come clean with the people of Ontario today. We do not want another 407 rip-off on behalf of the taxpayers of Ontario.

Hon Mrs Ecker: First of all, and I know the Liberals may disagree with this, but there are \$500 million of new highway construction; for example, in Durham region and out to the west. That simply would not have occurred without the involvement of the private sector. It was a commitment this government made to extend the 407. We have indeed done that. We believe that highway is needed across the top of Durham region. We are taking steps to do that.

Unlike the Liberals, we understand that sometimes the government doesn't have to do everything. There are things that the private sector can do better; there are things that the government can do better. Every year we review assets to see if changes are required, and if changes are required, the Liberals will be the first to know because we will be announcing it publicly.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I seek unanimous consent to give second and third readings to Bill 61, An Act to promote stability and good will in Toronto Catholic Elementary Schools. By doing this, we'll get the kids in the Catholic schools of Toronto back to school tomorrow.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is there unanimous consent? I'm afraid I heard some noes.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs): On behalf of my

good friend and colleague and my leader in the House, Chris Stockwell, I have the business of the House. Pursuant to standing order 55, I have a statement of business of the House for next week.

On Monday afternoon, we will debate Bill 28. On Monday evening, we will begin debate on Bill 43.

On Tuesday afternoon, we will debate the budget motion again. On Tuesday evening, we will continue debate on Bill 28.

On Wednesday afternoon, we will debate a Liberal opposition day. I have House duty on Wednesday, so I'm quite pleased about that.

Thursday morning, during private members' public business, we will discuss ballot item 11, standing in the name of Mr Christopherson; and ballot item 12, standing in the name of Mr Phillips. Thursday afternoon's debate will be on Bill 43.

PETITIONS

AUDIOLOGY SERVICES

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly. The title they have on it is "Listen: Our Hearing is Important!"

"Whereas services delisted by the Harris-Eves government now exceed \$100 million in total;

"Whereas Ontarians depend on audiologists for the provision of qualified hearing assessments and hearing aid prescriptions;

"Whereas the Harris-Eves government policy will virtually eliminate access to publicly funded audiology assessments across vast regions of Ontario;

"Whereas this new Harris-Eves government policy is virtually impossible to implement in underserved areas across Ontario;

"Whereas this policy will lengthen waiting lists for patients and therefore have a detrimental effect on the health of these Ontarians;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Ontario Legislature to demand the Mike Harris-Ernie Eves government move immediately to permanently fund audiologists directly for the provision of audiology services."

I affix my signature as I am in complete agreement with this petition.

MEDICAL REVIEW COMMITTEE

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the OHIP schedule of benefits is often unclear about its definitions of good medical practice, causing problems for patients and their physicians;

"The medical review committee of the College of Physicians and Surgeons has been aggressively clawing back payments to hard-working, conscientious doctors

and thereby exacerbating physician shortages in the province;

"We, the undersigned, request the Minister of Health to suspend further reviews by the medical review committee pending a negotiated agreement of an unambiguous schedule of benefits with representatives of affected practising physicians."

It's signed by hundreds, including myself.

COMMUNITY CARE

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the eastern Ontario branch of the Victorian Order of Nurses has been providing care in this community since 1897;

"Whereas community care will suffer by the closure of the eastern Ontario branch of the VON;

"Whereas community care in Napanee, Northbrook, Sharbot Lake and Cloyne will be drastically affected by the closure of the eastern Ontario branch of the VON;

"We, the undersigned, implore the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to recommend to the Ontario government that the necessary funds be provided to the community care access centre to ensure that the VON are able to maintain their community nursing programs."

I will affix my signature to this petition because I am in full agreement.

1550

ALUMINUM SMELTER

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition that reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Regarding cleanup of the abandoned smelter site in Georgina:

"Whereas the abandoned aluminum smelter located on Warden Avenue in the town of Georgina has been deemed to have heavy metals exceeding the Ministry of the Environment guidelines; and

"Whereas the site is adjacent to a wetland that leads into the Maskinonge River feeding into Lake Simcoe;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the Ministry of the Environment to conduct a full environmental assessment of this site followed by a cleanup of the full smelter site."

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"To the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care and the Lieutenant Governor in Council:

"We, the undersigned, urge you in the public interest, under the Public Hospitals Act, the Canada Health Act and Charter of Rights and Freedoms, to the following

decisions to improve the accessibility to mental health services in the Niagara region:

"(1) Locate the proposed children's mental health beds in the Niagara region;

"(2) Support the services tabled as needed in the Luke family petition."

It's signed by hundreds, and I've affixed my signature as well.

COMMUNITY CARE

The Acting Speaker (Mr David Christopherson): Further petitions? The member for Lennox-Hastings-Frontenac—I think I just butchered that. I'm sorry.

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): You got them all: Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington.

To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas well-managed and adequately funded home health care is a growing need in our community; and

"Whereas the provincial government has frozen community care access centre budgets, which has meant dramatic cuts to service agency funding and services to vulnerable citizens, as well as shortened visits by front-line workers; and

"Whereas these dramatic cuts, combined with the increased complexity of care for those who do qualify for home care, has led to an impossible cost burden to home care agencies; and

"Whereas the wages and benefits received by home care workers employed by home care agencies are well below the wages and benefits of workers doing comparable jobs in institutional settings; and

"Whereas front-line staff are also required to subsidize the home care program in our community by being responsible for paying for their own gas and for vehicle maintenance; and

"Whereas other CCACs and CCAC-funded agencies across the province compensate their staff between 29 cents and 42.7 cents per kilometre; and

"Whereas CCAC-funded agency staff in our own community are paid 26 cents a kilometre, with driving time considered 'hours worked';

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To act now to increase funding to the CCAC of Kingston, Frontenac, Lennox and Addington in order for it to adequately fund service agencies so they can fairly compensate front-line workers."

I will affix my signature to this petition because I am in full agreement.

COMPETITIVE ELECTRICITY MARKET

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislature.

"Whereas the Harris government's plan to privatize and deregulate Ontario's electricity system will lead to higher rates because private owners will sell more power

to US customers whose rates are typically 50% higher than Ontario's; and

"Whereas selling coal plants like Nanticoke to the private sector will lead to more pollution because the private owners will run the plants at full capacity to earn a profit; and

"Whereas electricity deregulation in California has led to sky-high rates and blackouts; and

"Whereas Ontario needs a system of public power that will ensure rate stability, environmental protection and secure access to power;

"Therefore be it resolved that the undersigned call on the government to scrap electricity deregulation and privatization and bring in a system of accountable public power. The first priority for such a public power system must be incentives for energy conservation and green power. Electricity rates and major energy projects must be subject to full public hearings and binding rulings by a public regulator instead of leaving energy rates to private profit."

It's signed by thousands. I have affixed my signature as well.

TUITION FEES

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition. It reads as follows:

"Petition: Freeze Tuition Fees

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario

"From: Scarborough campus students' council, University of Toronto

"Whereas average tuition fees in Ontario are the second-highest in Canada; and

"Whereas average undergraduate tuition fees in Ontario have more than doubled in the past 10 years; and

"Whereas tuition fees for deregulated programs have, in certain cases, doubled and tripled; and

"Whereas Statistics Canada has documented a link between increasing tuition fees and diminishing access to post-secondary education; and

"Whereas four other provincial governments have taken a leadership role by freezing and reducing tuition fees;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

"Freeze tuition fees for all programs at their current levels, and

"Take steps to reduce the tuition fees of all graduate programs, post-diploma programs and professional programs for which tuition fees have been deregulated since 1998."

I affix my signature. I'm in complete agreement.

WATER EXTRACTION

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it reads as follows:

"Whereas taking water for sale purposes is now recognized by Parliament as a great concern to Ontario residents; and

"Whereas the township of Centre Wellington has commissioned a comprehensive groundwater management study, funded by MOE grant, recently completed but not yet fully assessed; undertaken development of two additional wells to service current demand and modest future development in these major urban centres; implemented strict conservation bylaws for domestic usage, and begun water metering for all usage (commencing in 2003) in these same major urban centres; has not yet evaluated impacts on more than 2,000 private wells lying outside the major urban areas which may be susceptible to pumping of both municipal and other private wells; and

"Whereas the Ministry of the Environment is currently considering an application under section 34 of the Ontario Water Resources Act, for a permit to take a daily volume of 1,091,040 litres from a site in Centre Wellington township, a volume nearly equivalent to the daily consumption of the former village of Elora (more or less 3,000 of the 21,000 inhabitants of the township);

"We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"(1) Freeze all current applications for permits to take water for commercial (sale) purposes, subject to review of legislation correlating provincial responsibility with municipal responsibility for usage of these resources, considering both local requirements and those of private commercial interests;

"(2) Expedite revision of current legislation governing these valuable water resources so that constituents have some substantial protection from the influence, on local groundwater supply, of pumping wells for the commercial sale of water;

"(3) Instruct the Ministry of the Environment to institute more comprehensive testing to establish the area of influence on groundwater supplies before issuing a permit to take water for pumping large volumes of water from a well adjacent to other wells; and

"(4) Clarify the meaning of the water-taking and transfer regulation introduced in 1999, which purports to prohibit the transfer of water from Ontario's major water basins."

I have affixed my signature to this petition as per the rules of the House.

RIVER ACCESS

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): I present this petition on behalf of my colleague David Ramsay from Timiskaming-Cochrane.

"We, the undersigned, would ask you to reopen access to the Montreal River at the south end of the bridge at the Lower Notch hydro dam. We have had access to the river by this launch since the dam was completed and find the barring of this road to be unlawful and inconsiderate to many anglers who frequent this area. With the installation of a locked gate at the above-mentioned point,

fishermen are forced to travel over four miles and navigate rough terrain and steep hills that threaten one's safety when pulling a trailer in order to launch their vessels. Accidents will happen, people will be hurt and ... traffic jams will ensue.

"We have used and respected this launch since the completion of this dam. All we ask is that you respect our right to access this river without threat of injury or damage to our vehicles and vessels."

I've signed my name to the petition.

ABORTION

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario in Parliament assembled and it reads as follows:

"We, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, draw the attention of the House to the following:

"That Ontarians are being asked to consider alternate forms of health care delivery due to escalating costs; and

"That 65% of Ontarians surveyed in October 2002 objected to the public funding of abortion on demand and that almost all abortions are done for 'socioeconomic reasons' in Canada; and

"That the Canada Health Act imposes no duty on provinces to fund any services other than those which are medically necessary; and

"That there are no legal impediments preventing provinces from de-insuring abortion;

"Therefore, your petitioners call upon the Parliament of Ontario to enact legislation which will de-insure induced abortion."

It's signed by a number of my constituents. As per the rules of the House, I've affixed my signature to the top of it as well.

1600

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BACK TO SCHOOL
(TORONTO CATHOLIC ELEMENTARY)
AND EDUCATION AND PROVINCIAL
SCHOOLS NEGOTIATIONS
AMENDMENT ACT, 2003 /

LOI DE 2003 PRÉVOYANT LE RETOUR
À L'ÉCOLE (SECTEUR ÉLÉMENTAIRE DU
CONSEIL CATHOLIQUE DE TORONTO)
ET MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR
L'ÉDUCATION ET LA LOI SUR
LA NÉGOCIATION COLLECTIVE DANS
LES ÉCOLES PROVINCIALES

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 28, 2003, on the motion for second reading of Bill 28, An Act to resolve a labour dispute between the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association and the Toronto Catholic District School Board and to amend the Education Act

and the Provincial Schools Negotiations Act / *Projet de loi 28, Loi visant à régler le conflit de travail opposant l'Association des enseignantes et des enseignants catholiques anglo-ontariens et le conseil scolaire de district appelé Toronto Catholic District School Board et modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation et la Loi sur la négociation collective dans les écoles provinciales.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr David Christopherson): It is my understanding that the member who had the floor when this was last debated is not in the House. Therefore, the debate will now revert over to the official opposition. The floor is open for debate, and I look for a member of the official opposition.

Hon Jim Flaherty (Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'm sure my fellow members of the House will understand if I introduce a constituent of mine who is here in the members' gallery today. Rebecca Gordon is not only an active parent but is concerned about our school issues. She's brought with her a letter signed by about 70 grade 4 students asking that the teachers' strikes and work-to-rule which we've endured in Durham region no longer interrupt their educations.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Welcome. I'm not sure how in order that is, but I sense that the members on the other side appreciated the moment to gather. Therefore, we will revert back to me calling for speakers from the official opposition.

I now recognize the member for Hamilton East.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): I'm pleased today to rise to speak on the bill presented by this government that is intended to settle the dispute here in the city of Toronto. If you look at the bill that is in front of us, what we have is clearly a political document intended to double as an attempt by this government to somehow end the lockout.

Understand that it's not a strike; understand that the Toronto Catholic District School Board intentionally made the decision to lock out the teachers and keep those students out of school. This was not a strike determined by the teachers. The teachers have been out there every day. They've been willing to go to the classroom. They've been outside their schools waiting for the doors to be unlocked. It has been through what I believe to be the combined efforts of this government and the school board that these kids have been out of school. Some 69,000 students have been out of school not because the teachers have wanted them to be out of school, but because this government, in cahoots with the school board, has decided to use this as a political tool in a political agenda.

One must question the coincidence of the timing; one must question the interesting timing of this. At the same time that the Toronto Catholic District School Board decided that they were going to lock out the teachers and that this government decided to bring in legislation to end this lockout and force teachers to perform extracurricular activities—surprise, surprise—Tory ads ran on TV, paid for by the PC Party of Ontario, talking about banning

teachers' strikes. Maybe it's a coincidence. Maybe Ontarians should believe that by some magic coincidence we have a situation where the three incidents just happened at the same time. I would suggest that there's a lot more to it than that. I would suggest that it was a deliberate attempt by the school board and this government to work together to somehow fulfill a political agenda of banning teachers' strikes. Let's remember that this is the agenda that has been outlined in the platform unveiled by the Tory government.

Applause.

Mr Agostino: I give Mr Flaherty credit. He's applauding, and although I may disagree with the issue, I certainly respect the fact that Mr Flaherty was true to his word in the leadership debate, was honest with people of Ontario, and said, "Here's how I feel. I feel teachers' strikes should be banned." I respect that integrity. I may not agree with the content, but I certainly respect the integrity he has shown.

The Premier was adamantly against this. We recall back in 1982, when he was a backbench member representing the constituents of Parry Sound, where he worked hard to resolve a dispute and said, "We're not in a dictatorship. We live in a democracy. You can't ban. You should not trample on people's rights, and you should not ban the right to strike."

Also the same Ernie Eves in the leadership debate was very critical of Mr Flaherty's position. He was very critical, nasty, attacked Mr Flaherty mercilessly, pounded him at every opportunity, was against the idea Mr Flaherty had proposed to ban teachers' strikes. It was Mr Eves who said it would cost an additional \$700 million. That was Ernie Eves then, compared to Ernie Eves now.

I'm sure Mr Flaherty is glad that the Premier has finally seen the light, that the agenda of Mr Flaherty has been implemented and that the agenda of the Premier has gone to the back burner. But unlike Premier Eves, I am not in favour of taking \$700 million out of the classroom and putting it into teachers' salaries. That's what Ernie Eves wants to do. It was his own admission that it would cost \$700 million more to ban teachers' strikes in Ontario.

What do we believe? Do we believe the Ernie Eves of 1982 where he said it was undemocratic banning teachers' strikes? Do we believe the Ernie Eves of the leadership debate where he said that it was wrong, to paraphrase, that you can't legislate respect; you must earn it? Do we believe the Ernie Eves who said it was a bad idea because it would cost \$700 million more? Or do we believe the Ernie Eves of today who all of a sudden has now embraced the agenda of Mr Flaherty and those 45% of the supporters he got in a very successful, in my view, leadership race? Which Ernie Eves is going to show up tomorrow? Will it be the Ernie Eves of last year, of the year before, of 1982, or the new Ernie Eves who now believes teachers' strikes aren't acceptable?

When you look at this particular situation, this government could, in one day, have brought in a very simple, clean bill that would have simply ended the lockout. But

no, that wasn't good enough, because this was not about getting the kids back into the classrooms; this was about political gamesmanship; this was about implementing an election platform. They have not called the election. They've got their platform out there. They have lots of opportunities to go to the people of Ontario. We believe they should have gone to the people of Ontario months ago, but Ernie Eves has not found the intestinal fortitude yet to face the people.

Let's understand that this man has now been Premier for 15 months, and he's only been Premier as a result of roughly—

Interjection: Eighteen months.

Mr Agostino: Eighteen months, and only with the support of—overall it's 18,000 Tory members, and probably half of that, 9,000 to 10,000 card-carrying Tories. That's what has given this man the mandate to be Premier of Ontario. I believe this is the longest-serving, non-elected Premier we have had in this province.

Interjection.

Mr Agostino: He has not been elected by the people of Ontario to be Premier. He has abused his mandate. He has run out of time in his mandate. He is in the fourth year of his mandate. Ernie Eves does not have, in my view, the authority to continue governing the province of Ontario. But he'll keep delaying, because now it's an attempt to desperately cling to power at all cost. He will say anything, he will do anything to cling to power.

This bill is another phoney attempt at pretending he's trying to govern. If he was sincere about getting those kids back to school, this could have been done a week ago. All he had to do was bring in a clean bill that would have said simply, "End the lockout." But no, he went a step further. With Ernie Eves in his new-found tough guy image, it's, "Pick on teachers because we're down in the polls." With this new image of his, with his new bravado that he has found in taking on the teachers, and in a sense taking on the students, he has said, "No, we're going to make extra-curricular activities mandatory. We're now going to force those teachers to coach football or basketball or teach drama or music programs or plays," things that teachers have voluntarily done. Speaker, as you, and any of us who have experienced being involved in extra-curricular activities know, none of our teachers have been forced to do that.

What I remember through school, as all of us do, is not the classroom lessons, not your math, your English, your geography, your science, but the experience and interaction and involvement and commitment of your teachers, what they did beyond the call of duty.

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Hon Mr Flaherty: You loved school.

Mr Agostino: I loved school. It was a great experience and I spent the best 10 years of my life in high school.

It was that extra work that teachers did on their own, where they coached you in football or in your drama class or on the soccer field. Those teachers weren't forced to do that. They weren't legislated to do that. OK, I didn't do drama, I didn't do arts. I did sports.

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): You excel at drama.

Mr Agostino: The story of my life.

Those teachers did it because they wanted to do it. But this government is now saying to the teachers in this board and in every other board across Ontario, "With the passing of the legislation, you will now be forced to do this. It's no longer something you do because you want to do it, because you want to help your students. It's something we are going to force you to do." That is wrong. I agree with Ernie Eves: that is undemocratic. It is not a dictatorship that we live in—although some days I wonder, with this government.

This bill is not about getting those 69,000 students back to school. This bill is a backdoor attempt to implement an election strategy, an election platform for an election that they have not had the courage to call yet. I say to the government, if you're serious, remove the second part of the bill.

My colleague from Parkdale-High Park, Gerard Kennedy, introduced a bill that was a clean, very simple bill that would have the kids back in the class tomorrow morning. We asked for unanimous consent today, as we have a number of other times, and the government has blocked us every single time. If this government were seriously interested in getting these kids back to school, they would have supported Gerard Kennedy's bill—very simple, very clean, ends the lockout, doesn't force teachers to do extracurricular activities if they chose not to. But they're not interested in that, they're interested in playing politics with this issue.

This has been the history and the agenda of this government since 1995. They have gone to war with teachers right from day one.

Hon Mr Flaherty: Unions.

Mr Agostino: My colleague Mr Flaherty again says, "Unions," trying to set up somehow this big, ugly monster that represents teachers, this ugly monster that they like to paint as a union. I never quite pictured teachers to be the most radical workers in this province. I don't quite picture teachers storming the barricades or causing riots. I don't quite see teachers as the most radical workers we have in the province of Ontario.

Somehow, this government paints them to be these undemocratic—the leadership of the unions, whether the government likes it or not, gets elected as democratically as this government got elected last time. Once they get elected, they speak for their members, and they have the right and the responsibility to do that. But they somehow paint the union leaders—hang on: union bosses; they like that because it sounds like a much tougher, sort of American teamster type of word, the vision that they want to put out for people. It's those code words, those buzzwords that they like to use.

Frankly, teachers got into teaching because they wanted to be in the classroom. They're not in there because they want to be on the picket lines; they're not in here because they want to go to war with government. But understand: there has been more time lost due to

disruptions in the classrooms in the last eight years than there has been in the previous two governments combined. Why? Is it a coincidence? Is it a coincidence that in 1995 the then Minister of Education said, "We have to create a crisis. We have to break the system down, destroy it, so that we can build it up in our own image of what the education system is going to be"? Is it a coincidence that they have continued to go after teachers?

Remember the ads? I think we all remember those wonderful ads, where, again, attacking teachers for extracurricular activities and not putting in enough time, they ran this clock with this extra twenty minutes. How demeaning, how insulting to the profession, to these teachers that work very hard, that put in extra time, that put in time on weekends, at tournaments, at events with their kids. How demeaning and insulting to them to do this stupid ad with the twenty minutes.

Why was that done? Was that done to bring harmony into the system? Was that done to make peace with the teachers? Or was that done to somehow improve education? Can someone on that side of the House tell me how running those silly clock ads, those "20-minute" ads suggesting that teachers are lazy and overpaid and need to be punished, helps classroom education? Maybe someone can explain that.

It was just another blatant attack on teachers and, indirectly, an attack on students, because you only get the best out of the students by getting the best out of the teachers. If you're going to demean and demoralize and attack the individuals who are to deliver that education—the teachers—how do you expect that to improve the system?

They have systematically cut funding for textbooks; they've cut funding for computers. Our classrooms are in disarray in regard to physical structure. I brought this example to the Legislature last year: one of the schools in my riding had to move the desks every time it rained and place buckets where those desks were because the school board could not afford to fix the roof. Computer rooms had to be shut down because it was leaking. Exposed wires in classrooms, paint that was peeling—that's not unusual. It's in my riding, and I'm sure it's probably in many other ridings across this province, because this government decided that investing in tax cuts for the largest corporation in this province was a bigger priority than investing in education.

Then they continued their attack on public education by bringing in legislation that would give a tax credit to private schools—again, I say to you, something that Premier Eves, when running for the Tory leadership, thought was a bad idea. He thought it was a bad idea. He said we could not afford it. He said they could not meet the curriculum standards. Again, I give Mr Flaherty credit: another part of his agenda was implemented by Ernie Eves, the same agenda that Premier Eves fought against and went after Mr Flaherty for talking about during the leadership campaign—that same agenda of the private school tax credit. Again, Mr Flaherty, with all due

respect to him, believed in it and still believes in it. He's always stood by that belief. I can't say the same thing about the Premier because the Premier's all over the map on it. He thought it was a bad idea. He went on and on. He attacked Mr Flaherty. It was ugly. It was so tough to take sometimes watching that.

Hon Mr Flaherty: I used to be six foot two.

Mr Agostino: Exactly. You shrunk him by about eight inches during the whole time that this went around.

Here's Mr Flaherty, someone that truly believed in the cause, being dismissed and ridiculed by Mr Eves during the leadership campaign simply for the sake of getting some votes. I felt bad that the now-Premier mercilessly attacked Mr Flaherty for his ideas on a private school tax credit. But what does Ernie Eves do now that he's Premier? He embraces it: "It's a wonderful idea. We're bringing it in"—\$500 million taken out of public education for private schools.

I remember former Premier Mike Harris saying very clearly how bad an idea it was, and saying it wasn't a priority—couldn't do it. Now wrote Finance Minister Ecker a letter saying, "No, it would take money out of the public education system. It would be detrimental to public education in Ontario." Now she's the finance minister implementing this legislation.

Where is this party? Where is this government? What do they stand for when it comes to education? They're just all over the map. I always say to people, look, if you don't like Ernie Eves's position today, just wait a week; then it'll change and you'll be happy. What does he stand for when it comes to public education? I really don't know. I really don't understand it.

As we get closer to an election, hopefully sooner rather than later, I think Ontarians, when it comes to public education, are going to have a clear choice. They're going to be able to choose between a wishy-washy government led by Ernie Eves that changes its mind every two weeks on public education, that one day is in favour of tax credits, the next day is opposed, that one day is in favour of teacher strikes, the next day is opposed. They've got a real choice.

Our leader, Dalton McGuinty, has laid out a platform that is real, credible and fundamentally true to his beliefs when it comes to public education. We're going to make sure we have smaller classrooms. We're not going to put an average; we're going to guarantee classrooms of 20 from JK to grade 3.

We're going to ensure that students learn to the age of 18. We don't think in this day and age of technology and global economy that it's acceptable for kids to quit in grade 9. We're going to ensure that kids stay in a learning environment till the age of 18.

We're going to give support to schools that are doing well, and we're going to use those skills and expertise in other schools that need their help.

We're going to guarantee minimum test results within the term of our government. That will be a guarantee. No government has ever done that in the history of this province. We're going to bring the standards up, and 75% of those students are going to meet those standards.

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These are real commitments rooted in a real belief that public education is important and public education is valuable.

Most importantly, we're going to treat teachers with respect and dignity. We may disagree—we're not always going to agree with the teachers—but dignity and respect will be at the top of the agenda when dealing with teachers in this province. We're going to treat them as the committed, dedicated professionals they are. We're going to make sure that they feel wanted, that they understand they're important, that they understand that the young minds in front of them are the future of this province and this country. We're going to make sure that teachers understand that their government believes that, that their government is not just there to attack them and to use them as political pawns every time they're down in the polls, every time they need to get a lift somehow: "Let's target teachers. Let's just tell people that teachers are lazy, overpaid, underworked and we should go after them." That is wrong. That is unacceptable. That is immoral today in a society where education is so important and public education is so important.

As we get closer to this legislation being finally voted upon, I ask this government again to reconsider what they're doing. If you're really serious about getting the kids back in the classroom, do the right thing. Withdraw the second part of that bill and make it a clean bill. Just simply have the teachers go back to the classroom. Don't force them to do extracurricular activities; don't force them to do things that they have done in the past simply because you want to legislate them back and look like a tough guy.

They can pass my colleague Gerard Kennedy's bill, which would get the teachers and the kids back in the classroom tomorrow morning. But that's not what they're concerned about. It's a political agenda here. It's an agenda of attack against teachers; it's an agenda of trying to score cheap political points; it's an agenda that frankly, when it comes to the Premier, is not based on any principle and values. It's an agenda simply of political stunts, of a political platform at the expense of 69,000 kids, and that is wrong. I can tell you, under a Dalton McGuinty government that would not happen. Under a Dalton McGuinty government the kids will always come first, not political stunts, not political cheap points, not political polls.

As I wrap up, I say to my colleague Mr Flaherty, as I mentioned a number of times today, although I disagree with many of his positions on teaching, I certainly admire the principles he's espoused on that and the fact that he has some conviction. I'd ask him not to burn himself out too quickly during the election campaign because he's going to be really busy in the leadership race afterwards. I wouldn't want him to tire out.

We're going to vote against this bill the way it is today. We hope they come to their senses and withdraw this and support our bill.

The Acting Speaker: Members now have up to two minutes to make comment or ask questions.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I've only got two minutes now, but in a few more minutes I'm going to have my 20-minute time slot to talk to this bill. You'd better know and you should be concerned about the fact that I've just been served with notice of a time allocation motion on this bill. We haven't even finished but a few hours, a handful of hours, of debate around this bill that puts teachers not just in Toronto but across this province under direct attack yet again, and the government moves time allocation. What that means is that if this time allocation motion passes, and I suspect it will and that'll be done Monday afternoon, on completion of second reading there will be not even a minute of further debate, that the vote shall be put immediately, that there will be no deferral of the vote and that then it will immediately be put for third reading with no debate, none whatsoever. So not only does this government attack and condemn teachers; this government attacks and condemns parliamentary process and shows its disdain once again, disdain tantamount to contempt. Its contempt for teachers is clear; its contempt for this Legislature is even clearer.

Time allocation: New Democrats are not going to be a party to teacher bashing, to beating up on teachers. We're not going to be a party to this government rewriting the rules. Let's face it: the issue isn't the teachers' right to strike. This isn't a strike; it's a lockout. It's not the teachers' right to strike that's a problem; it's this government that's a problem and their funding formula that's a problem and, quite frankly, the incredibly high level of collaboration we've seen between this government and the Toronto Catholic board, together, that's a problem.

The Acting Speaker: Further questions and comments? The Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation.

Hon Mr Flaherty: What a great name. It describes what the ministry is doing.

I have just two minutes to speak about this important issue. I listened carefully to the argument being advanced by the member for Hamilton East. I respect teachers, as he does. I respect his comments with respect to excellence in the teaching profession—not only the teachers who have taught our children, but the teachers who taught me. It has been a great experience to have our children taught as they have been, and taught as well as they have been. The principal of their school is wonderful. All of those things are true.

The difficulty is this: we have union leaders who are dictating the way the education system shall be run. That's the problem. They speak for some teachers; sure they do. But they don't speak for the teachers they have to fine, which they do, who want to perform extra-curricular activities. The basketball coach teaches a couple of basketball practices after a work-to-rule campaign has started and they fine the teacher. What's that about? What kind of organization is that? What kind of belief do those union leaders have in service to students and parents? Why do we run four public school systems in the province of Ontario? Not for the teachers' unions, but for the parents and the children.

Rebecca Gordon from Whitby is in the gallery today. She brings with her the voice of 70 grade 4 students in my area, in the town of Whitby, who suffered work to rule, who had these things taken away from them by union leaders in Toronto dictating to Durham region, dictating to the teachers there what they could do or not do in serving students and serving families. Our school system is about parents and children. It isn't about union leaders dictating the way our schools will be run.

School testing and teacher testing are important. They've fought us on every one of those points. Thank goodness we're making the progress we are.

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): The minister is just dead wrong. He knows that this is a situation of a lockout. This is not a situation of the union doing anything to precipitate a labour action. This is a lockout, and the minister knows it.

He also knows, because he's an expert at it, that this is a result of eight long years of efforts to create chaos. The very last stake that was going to be driven into our public education system and our separate school system was going to be this threat that the minister put forth to somehow end all labour actions and create illegal strikes to create even more chaos in the province of Ontario.

It was dismissed by the present Premier as wrong, and the response from Minister Flaherty was that Ernie Eves was a pale pink imitation of Dalton McGuinty. A year later, it turns out that Ernie is a pale pink imitation of Jim Flaherty. It turns out that the Premier of Ontario has turned out to be even more of a ditherer and waffler than the Honourable Jim Flaherty could ever have imagined. I don't think even he could have imagined that the Premier of Ontario would have taken Minister Flaherty's most outrageous ideas, which he referred to as most outrageous, and turned them into his own platform. It's unbelievable. This desperate action of a Premier who has lost the courage to go to the people, who has no mandate from the people and who must call an election, is truly going to be one of the very many last acts of the Premier, Ernie Eves.

I can tell you that the people of St Paul's are not buying this. They aren't buying what Minister Flaherty is saying. They're not buying this line. They want the kids to go back to school. Let's get the kids back to school.

1630

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): Two minutes hardly gives me time to say what I need to say on this, but I will tell you that the teachers are one of the finest groups we have in this entire province. I have nothing but the highest respect for them and nothing but the highest respect for their democratically elected unions. Those unions are democratic. Every year or two years the members must have a vote, which can't be put off because the president wants to put it off for a couple of months until the polls are better, but they have to be held exactly—

Hon Mr Flaherty: We don't need your union bosses in Toronto.

Mr Prue: Yes, I'm hearing all your anti-union rhetoric. I've heard it, we've all heard it and no one's

buying it. They have to hold their elections in a democratic way and cannot put them off until the polls are better, something the Premier seems very wont to do.

They do not try, and have never tried, to hold the children of this province hostage the way that this government has. What has happened is nothing short of disgraceful. There are 69,000 children who cannot go to school in the city of Toronto, 69,000 children who want to go back to school, 69,000 groups of parents who want them to go back to school and thousands of teachers who were out here in front of the Legislature demanding to go back to school. The reality is, this is not a strike perpetrated by any union, group or teachers. This is a lockout of a board that is following the Conservative dictates of the Premier and Mr Flaherty, who is all too willing to stand up there with petitions from some kids—I do not pass any umbrage on them; they were only in grade 4 or 5—who could not conceivably know what the petition is they're signing; who could not conceivably understand the difference between a lockout and a strike; who could not conceivably understand the right-wing rhetoric of Mr Flaherty and the Conservatives.

The Acting Speaker: That's four already. I now give the member for Hamilton East up to two minutes to respond.

Mr Agostino: I want to thank the members for Niagara Centre, Whitby-Ajax, St Paul's and Beaches-East York.

When you listen to the member for Whitby-Ajax, you would think that the teachers' federation is somehow being run by the late Jimmy Hoffa. The language that is being used is quite interesting.

Interjection.

Mr Agostino: No, the old one. They haven't found the body yet.

Today they brought in closure, another example of democracy, Ernie Eves-style. The member for Whitby-Ajax says, "It's these union bosses that are causing this problem." But I ask the member why, during the previous 10 to 15 years before this government came into power, were there fewer disruptions in the classroom than there have been in the last eight years? Is it a sheer coincidence? There were the same union leaders at that point, and there were fewer disruptions in 15 years than there have been in eight years. So you ask yourself, what has caused those disruptions in the classroom? Is it this government's agenda, its attack on teachers?

I say to the government, if you're serious and if you're really interested in getting those 69,000 kids back into the classroom, don't bring in closure, don't drag this debate on; simply give unanimous consent to the bill from my colleague Gerard Kennedy that would end the lockout. It would get the teachers back in the classroom where they want to be tomorrow morning. It would eliminate any other provision of the work-to-rule aspect, and then it would allow an arbitration process to take place. It's a process that has worked. It doesn't impose any new changes, as the government bill does—it tries to bring in their election agenda.

As I said before, the Ernie Eves government is not interested in getting the kids back in the classroom. They're using this Legislature, through the back door, to implement a platform and an agenda that they have not yet had to encourage to go to the people of Ontario with. But as soon as they go, the people of Ontario will speak very clearly against the agenda of this government.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Kormos: If there's an opportunity, I know Mr Prue, the member for Beaches-East York, very much wants to participate in this debate. But he, along with so many other members of this Legislature, is going to be denied that opportunity, because the government served notice of a closure motion.

Let's put this in context to understand exactly what's happening. And I want you, Speaker, and other folks who are watching to get a pen or a pencil, because I'm going to give you some phone numbers in just a couple of minutes. They're going to be incredibly important phone numbers. So get a pen or a pencil and a piece of paper, because we're going to talk about some phone numbers that folks might be interested in dialling if they really want to go to the source of the problem here.

Let's understand very clearly: this is a lockout. Not a single Toronto Catholic teacher wanted to be anywhere other than in the classroom teaching, which is where they were—every single one of them, to the final one—they were in the classroom. It was the Toronto Catholic board that slammed the doors shut in the faces of the teachers and those students. The board shut the doors. Every single Catholic teacher in Toronto was in the classroom teaching, caring for the kids, as they care for them not just in Toronto but across this province, and it was the board of education that shut the door on them. This isn't a strike.

Interjection.

Mr Kormos: Thank you kindly, Lucas. Where are you from—Woodstock? Lucas, page from Woodstock, just got some library research for me.

The board locked out these teachers. The board sent these students home. The board told the teachers that they couldn't come back to the classroom. Make no mistake about it: Toronto's Catholic teachers have been trying to negotiate. They've come to the board time after time with offer after offer. And it's not just a matter of the board not accepting the offers, but the board hasn't wanted to resume negotiations.

Just recently, we saw the membership of OECTA and their negotiating team go to the board with a proposal under section 40. The teachers go to the board and say, "Look, you've locked us out. We, the teachers, want to be back in the classroom. Therefore, let's utilize section 40 and voluntarily enter arbitration." The teachers proposed that. The board turned them down once again.

The board said it needed this legislation. The board said that the arbitration process the teachers were proposing would have resulted in unaffordable costs. The board either got some very bad advice, in which case they should fire some of their \$1,000-a-day consultants

who gave them that advice, or in fact the board has been maliciously distorting the facts, because this government, back in 1996, changed the arbitration formula under the Education Act significantly.

Since 1996, voluntary arbitration, the kind of arbitration that Catholic teachers in this city proposed to the board—because, let me tell you, the teachers have been far more interested in ending this lockout than the board has been. The teachers of Toronto have been far more interested in ending this lockout than this government has been. The teachers have been far more interested in getting those kids back into the classroom than Ernie Eves and his Minister of Education have been. Their efforts have been rebuffed every step of the way, by this government and by Toronto's Catholic board.

What a crock for the board to suggest that somehow it would result in inordinate costs for them to enter into voluntary arbitration. This government, in 1996, changed the schema. It made it quite clear, in law, that in making a decision or award, the arbitrator shall take into consideration all factors it considers relevant, including the following one: the employer's ability to pay in light of its fiscal situation.

1640

An arbitrator, as proposed by Toronto's Catholic teachers, would have to take into consideration the ability of a board to pay, amongst other things. It also, though, requires the arbitrator to take into consideration the employer's ability to attract and retain qualified employees.

You see, this is one of the fundamental concerns by the Catholic teachers in the course of these negotiations. What Catholic teachers have been trying to tell you is that because of the huge disparity between Toronto Catholic teachers' salaries, amongst other things, and teachers' salaries in the public board and in neighbouring communities, if there isn't a fair adjustment—all they're asking for is fairness—in those salaries, the Catholic board in Toronto is not going to be able to either attract or retain teachers.

Look, this government has had teachers under attack for eight years now. Lie, cheat and steal—no matter which way they've had to do it, they've done it to vilify and condemn teachers and other workers in the educational community, and they have. This government has treated teachers and other educational workers, yes, with contempt, just the same way it treated this Legislature with contempt when this government held its bogus budget in Frank Stronach's auto parts factory rather than here in this Legislative Assembly.

I'll be quite candid. New Democrats believe in the fundamental right of any worker to withdraw their labour. We believe that's fundamental in a democratic society. The only places I know where workers can't withdraw their labour are in dictatorships. In Fascist countries workers can't withdraw their labour, in countries where trade union organizations are oh, but a sham.

New Democrats: yes, we believe in the fundamental right of workers to withdraw their labour. But let's make something else perfectly clear: teachers have demon-

strated over the course of decades and generations that they are loath to engage in work stoppages. Look, I've met over the course of my lifetime, I'm sure, thousands of teachers, like others, as a kid, as I was going through school, and now and in any number of circumstances, talking to teachers in their classrooms and in their schools, out at the market square and at any number of community events and, yes, during the course of working around issues like this lockout of teachers by the Toronto board. I haven't met a teacher whose first and primary motive for teaching hasn't been to teach kids and to make their lives better and to make sure they're the best-trained young people this province has ever witnessed.

I meet teachers weekly who spend hundreds of dollars out of their own pockets, literally out of their own pockets, to supply their classrooms with teaching supplies, from the earliest grades—yes, and I've been in those classrooms, the little kids, the really little ones, where teachers are literally going to the stationery store and buying construction paper, crayons and other things like that to bring into the classroom—all the way through to the most senior levels of secondary school, where teachers are out of pocket.

The problem isn't teachers; the problem is this government, the Conservatives, and their defunding of education and their attack on teachers and other educational workers.

I told you I was going to give you some phone numbers. You see, the real problem here of course isn't the teachers; it's Ernie Eves and his Conservatives and it's the Toronto Catholic school board. Folks should be concerned about what's happening to teachers by virtue of the board continuing to lock them out and by virtue of their kids not being in the classroom being taught by those teachers who want to be teaching them.

Let me just focus on, let's say, two members of the Toronto Catholic school board. There's a trustee on that board called Angela Kennedy. I'm told that Angela Kennedy was the trustee who moved the motion that locked out the teachers. Don't forget: that's when there were still negotiations going on. It was Angela Kennedy who locked out the teachers by virtue of her motion.

"Who is this woman Angela Kennedy?" you say. I think she's a Conservative. Why do I think that? Because this same Angela Kennedy happens to be the Conservative candidate in the upcoming provincial election in the riding of Beaches-East York. I think she's a well-connected Tory, because who was among her nominators? Listen carefully, friends, because you'll recognize this name too: one Mr Paul Christie. One Mr Paul Christie, Tory hack flak, is the guy who was marched into the Toronto public board to undermine the democratic role of democratically elected trustees. He's being greased, he's being pieced off fantastically. This guy Paul Christie is making, Mr Colle tells me—repeat it again.

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): One hundred and eighty-five thousand.

Mr Kormos: One hundred and eighty-five grand a year; \$185,000 a year—Mr Paul Christie, who was

marched into the public board in Toronto to seize it, to trample over the role of elected trustees because the government didn't like what the trustees were doing, didn't like what the people's elected representatives were doing. So they march in Paul Christie, Tory hack flak, who was also the campaign manager for one Chris Stockwell during Stockwell's leadership bid in which he achieved less than 1%, I think, of the vote support—

Mr Colle: Christie should have been fired.

Mr Kormos: No, look: in most polls you've got a margin of error of 2% to 3%. If Stockwell only got 1% of the leadership votes, he could have gotten none. Do you understand what I mean? Or he could have owed some. Think about it. I mean, 1%. I know there are bikers who walk around with "One Percenter" tattooed on their shoulders. Stockwell should have "One Percenter" tattooed on his shoulder. He's not here. He's going to come running back. Wait until Monday. He's going to be alarmed and he's going to be outraged. If only he could feign sincerity as effectively as he feigns outrage, his career would be made.

You've got one Paul Christie, intimate, tight—we're talking pillow talk here—with the Conservative establishment in Ontario, tight with Angela Kennedy—clear-cut Conservative. Talk about clear-cutting, yes; she's just mowing down teachers left and right, the person who moves the motion to lock out the teachers. By the way, if you want to talk to Ms Kennedy, feel free to do so. Ask Ms Angela Kennedy whether she's getting marching orders from this government, because I'm not about to make that statement. You can draw that inference. The telephone number, Ms Kennedy—work number, please, because I don't want folks bothering Ms Kennedy at home; her conscience is going to bother her enough: 416-512-3406. That number again: 416-512-3406. Angela Kennedy, über-Tory, clearly not serving the interests of her own constituents, clearly not serving the interests of teachers, clearly not serving the interests of students—she locked the teachers out; she sent the students home. She was part of the body that made the decision not to participate in the teachers' proposal to voluntarily undergo an arbitration process, one that would have returned teachers back to school this morning—not Monday, not Tuesday; today. It's not the opposition that's keeping teachers out of the school. It's not the opposition that's keeping students out of the classroom; it's the Tory government and the Toronto Catholic board.

1650

Call Ms Kennedy at 416-512-3406 and ask her why she doesn't want kids to get their education. Ask her why she locked teachers out of their classrooms. Ask Ms Kennedy why she's serving partisan interests rather than the interests of her community: parents, teachers and students.

While you're at it, you might as well go to the top dog. This board has a chair. I've seen him on television. I've seen him try to slam the teachers and make suggestions about the teachers' negotiating style, all of which, in my view, were grossly incorrect. They've got a guy called

Joe Carnevale. He happens to be the chair of the Toronto District Catholic School Board—Joe Carnevale. This is where this gets messier, because I've seen some of things—maybe Mr Carnevale, the chair of the board, was misquoted. Maybe day after day he was misquoted, but you've got Joe Carnevale not being particularly, oh, supportive of the proposition of getting the teachers back.

Ms Kennedy is a clear-cut Conservative. No two ways about it she's the Conservative candidate. One can suspect that her home and her office are plastered with pictures and statuary of Ernie Eves and Jim Flaherty. She has little Harris buttons, like those Chairman Mao badges people used to wear back in the 1960s. Instead of the little red book, it's the blue book. One of her partners in crime is a fellow called Joe Carnevale, who is no Tory. This guy Carnevale is a Liberal.

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): What?

Mr Kormos: I don't know. I suppose that if you're the president of the York South-Weston federal Liberal riding association, I presume you're a Liberal. I suppose that if you're the executive vice-president for the York South-Weston provincial Liberal Party riding association, I presume you're a Liberal. And if you're the Toronto regional director for the Liberal Party of Canada, well, if the first two functions and roles didn't support the inference that this guy is a Liberal, surely being the Toronto regional director of the Liberal Party of Canada allows one to conclude, not inappropriately, that he's a Liberal.

As I've often observed, one of the nice things about being a Liberal is that you don't always have to be a liberal. I mean, inherent in being a Liberal is that you don't always have to be a liberal. We've witnessed that time and time again.

But you see, Joe Carnevale—I should give you his phone number so you can give him a call. Joe Carnevale is the chair of the Catholic board. Ask Joe Carnevale, the chair, why he's locking out teachers and keeping kids out of school. His number is 416-512-3403. That number once again: 416-512-3403. After you call Angela Kennedy, Tory board member, and tear a strip off her, call Joe Carnevale and tear a strip off him. Find out why they are locking teachers out of schools here in the city of Toronto.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Questions and comments?

Mr Colle: It's certainly a hard act to follow the outspoken, passionate member from Niagara Centre. I think he has highlighted something very important here. What is really tragic about the lockout of the children of the Catholic schools in Toronto is that this government could have easily ended it with the stroke of a pen. Instead, they put forth a bill which dealt not only with the lockout, but also dealt with the teacher situations and the problems across Ontario. Therefore, they knew that the bill would not pass quickly. They did it on purpose. It was so blatant and transparent. Such cynicism is really a hallmark of the Ernie Eves-Mike Harris government. They are willing to prolong the lockout and put families,

children into hard situations where families have to pay for child care and scramble to get places for their children. The children are missing out on school.

This government could have quickly ended this lockout. Instead, as my colleague from the New Democratic side has said, they have joined together with a group of trustees, sadly enough, with the separate school board—as they now call it, the Catholic school board—to keep these 69,000 children out of class. It is just unconscionable what this government has done, all to listen to the directions of their campaign manager, Guy Giorno, so they could find ways of bashing teachers, bashing public education, bashing Catholic education. It's a shameful thing that they're doing to the children of Toronto.

Mr AL McDonald (Nipissing): It's my pleasure to rise and join the debate here on Thursday, late in the afternoon. Let's say it: we're missing the point here. At some point, somebody has to stand up for the children and the parents in the province of Ontario. Really, isn't that what education is all about, educating our children?

I've heard from many teachers in my riding, and I've heard the stories where their bags are searched when they're leaving school, just in case they might be bringing something home. That's wrong. This is a free world. You know what? There might be those teachers that want to withdraw their services. That's fine, but to demand that the teachers that really want to help the students, that want to coach basketball or volleyball, or go to the graduation, or speak to the parents or write the report cards—somebody has to stand up for them. Somebody has to stand up and give children a voice.

Let's face it: these children want to be at school. Each day that they lose they'll never recover. That's our future. Our future is our children. What are we telling them? Are we playing politics here? I think that's what it's all about. There was a bill introduced a week and a half ago, and then all of a sudden I heard the Liberals stand up and say that now they're going to put their bill forward. They're not going to support ours they want us to support theirs.

The bill that was introduced was clean on this side. It basically asked the other parties to agree. You know what? The students would be back in. They've taken a stance, they've politicized it. I want to stand up for the hard-working teachers, the parents and the children of this province.

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): I just want to concur with my colleague from Nipissing, the great riding encompassing North Bay. I know that they have a great festival there every summer, and I hope to be able to take that in this year. I hope many people across the province don't put off those vacation plans this year and they come to Niagara, they go North Bay and they come to Toronto to celebrate what's going to be a great summer.

We want the kids in the separate school system in Toronto to have a great summer. It's going to be tough for them to have a great summer if they lose their school year. We're getting close to that time of the year—May 29 today, May 30 tomorrow. June and the end of the school year are fast approaching. We need to get our

teachers back to work. We need to end the lockout. We need to get the teachers back in the classroom. We need them to make sure they're administering all the tests they need to administer. They need to be meeting parents, they need to be doing report cards—all the things that are essential parts of a teacher's job.

If we could just move on and get by political differences—the Liberals may have made promises for the upcoming election to different teachers' unions. I think that seems to be the sticking point for them, and I wish they would just get beyond it. This is a very simple exercise. Pass this legislation and we'll end the lockout; we'll have mediation-arbitration. Wrap up the dispute between the two parties while the students are back in class finishing and getting their year.

1700

Mr Prue: It is always a pleasure to comment on the speeches of my friend the member from Niagara Centre. He comes into this place with a great deal of passion, and I will tell you that when he speaks, we listen. Not only is he entertaining, but he is passionate and he is willing to say exactly what is happening.

What he said is true. What is happening is that this particular Catholic school board in Toronto is being held hostage and being aided and abetted by the government of this province. It is no coincidence, as he so forthrightly points out, that the government comes in with its plan, the same night the Catholic school board adopts the plan, and a day or two later the person who puts forward that plan is nominated by Paul Christie to be a candidate for the Conservatives in the election. I think if people who are watching this look and understand, this is precisely what is happening here. This is not, as some of the members opposite will say, about getting kids back to school. Of course that's involved, but what you are doing is attempting to manipulate public opinion when public opinion is clearly against what you have done in the school system. You are attempting to castigate teachers. You are attempting to hold children as hostages to your bill.

Your bill is not a clean bill, with the greatest of respect. Your bill has tied to it conditions that you know the teachers cannot and will not accept, not the Catholic school board and not the rest of the teachers of this province. If you were truly interested in the children, you would order them back without those conditions. But I will clearly tell you that you have your own agenda, you are running your own agenda, and you are having members of the Catholic school board run it on your behalf.

Mr Kormos: The government bill is far from a clean bill. Mind you, it doesn't have the orangutan clause, as observers have come to refer to the arbitrator selection. Remember how we called it the Guy Giorno clause here? Well, lawyers out there call it the orangutan clause.

You see, what happened is that this government recently got beat up a little bit in the Superior Court of this country, which made it quite clear that this government didn't know spit from Shinola when it came to arbitration, that this government had twisted and dis-

torted arbitration principles: long-time, centuries-old arbitration principles. If you read the recent decision, the CUPE/SEIU judgment, you'll find that once again this government did not fare well in court. Its track record in the courtrooms of this province has been rather dismal.

But I tell you, this does contain a province-wide impact that will curtail the right of teachers to determine what are voluntary activities being engaged in by teachers. We know it; it's clear. You have packaged this together. You have tried to exploit the lockout. I believe this government has been party to the actual lockout, that this government has dabbled in the affairs of the Catholic board and used some of its partisan colleagues to achieve this government's ends, and that there's been collaboration as well with Liberals on that board. I consider that a despicable sort of thing.

This bill is filthy. This bill is obscene. This bill is a dangerous precedent. You guys think you're tough? You want to take on teachers? I'll tell you what. Call an election and campaign on your attack on teachers. Call an election. Defer this bill. Tell the board to smarten up and stop playing games and to enter into voluntary arbitration with Toronto teachers, just like Toronto teachers have offered to, and call an election. You want to beat up on teachers? You'll be in the battle of your lifetime.

The Speaker: The member for Niagara Falls in further debate.

Mr Maves: It's a pleasure to rise to speak to Bill 28, an act that wants to end the lockout and the labour dispute between the Toronto separate school board and the Toronto separate school teachers, one dispute that has 69,000 children out of the classroom still today.

I want to try to get right to the crux of the matter. What has happened in the province of Ontario over the years, in all parties—Liberal, NDP; doesn't matter who is in office—when there is a strike or a lockout a certain amount of time goes by as the two parties try to resolve the dispute. And after a certain amount of time the Education Relations Commission comes forward to the government and says, "The kids are in danger of losing their year," and upon that notification, into the Legislature the government comes and introduces a bill which is back-to-work legislation. The NDP passed that back-to-work legislation a couple of times when they were in office as the government, the Liberals have done that and the Conservative government has done that. It's a standard process. Usually the Education Relations Commission waits about a month, or getting close to a month, before they say, "Legislate them back to work." They go back to work, mediation or arbitration is set up to resolve the dispute, and that's how these disputes have been handled in the past in Ontario.

A very similar process happened here. We knew that the year was going to be in jeopardy. There was this lockout with the separate board, and, as I said in my early comments, it is May 29 right now. We're getting close to June and the end of the year, so we couldn't wait much longer. We introduced a bill.

Over the past little while, what we've been hearing, for me personally, anecdotally, were people doing work-

to-rule campaigns across the province where teachers were being told, "We don't want you to mark report cards. That's a voluntary activity," the unions said. "We don't want you to do that. We don't want you to participate in things like graduation exercises. Those are voluntary activities, and as part of our work-to-rule campaign, we don't want you to do that." We heard anecdotally that union members were checking teachers' bags as they were leaving school to see if indeed they were bringing home report cards, and they would tell them they can't do that; they're in violation of a union edict. This is kind of shocking. The member from North Bay mentioned that.

In this bill—and this is what the dispute is; this is why the two parties opposite have decided not to give their consent. We've asked for unanimous consent every day since this bill was introduced, probably at least five times, and the parties opposite won't give it. In this bill we have said, "Look, you're going to go back to work; there's going to be a mediation-arbitration process." There are also five things that we have said, in this bill and the regulation attached to it, that are principal to doing the work of a teacher; five things that are essential to their jobs. What are those five things?

First of all, they have to administer tests. I think anyone who's a teacher, anyone who knows anything about the education system, would say, "You can't really be a teacher and you can't teach your kids and evaluate your kids without administering tests." So we've said you can't say, "We're going to go back to work. We're going to collect our paycheque because we're going to stand in front of a class from 9 to 3, but we're not going to administer any tests because that's not part of our job." We said, "That's not right; it is part of your job. It's obviously part of your job."

Secondly, we said "report cards." Teachers unions have said, "Report cards aren't part of our job." How can that not be part of your job? I think every single Ontario citizen would stand up and say that teachers marking report cards and filling out report cards for kids is part of their jobs. I know the teachers I have talked to all believe it's part of their job. In fact, it's a difficult part of their job; it's a time-consuming part of their job. When we've had to speak to teachers before, they've gone to great pains to tell us they don't just teach 9 to 3, that's not just their job, that things like report cards are a big part of their job. I agree with them: it is a fundamental part of the job of being a teacher.

What other things have we said teachers should have to do and they can't say they're not going to do as part of a work-to-rule campaign? Graduation exercises. They all get sort of attached to their kids at the end of the year; we all know that. Why they wouldn't want to participate in graduation exercises is beyond me. In fact, I think just about every teacher does want to help their kids with their graduation exercises at the end of the year, but sometimes they're told by their union that they cannot participate or help organize them because the union deems them to be extracurricular activities. We're saying in this bill and the attached regulations that that's not the case.

1710

We're also requiring them to transfer marks and to work with their students, for instance, in co-op placements. The kids can't do that themselves, and co-op is now a growing part of children's education in Ontario, an important part. If a teacher all of a sudden decides, "That's not part of my job as a teacher," and the union says, "Don't do that," how is a kid ever going to get his own co-op placement?

The last thing they say, "We're not going to do any more, we refuse to do it, not part of our job," about is parent-teacher meetings. Teachers will tell you themselves that they view parent-teacher meetings as a fundamental part of their job.

So we've said, "Here are five things." We want to legislate them back to work. We're going to legislate a mediation-arbitration process, one that the NDP and the member for Niagara Centre just stood up and said was a good process in the bill, so we know they're not opposed to that process. We know they're not opposed to the process of legislating them back to work because they've done it themselves, the NDP and the Liberals, when they were in government. They've even voted in favour of back-to-work legislation when we were in government. We've had, I believe, all-party agreement. It's these five things, and all of a sudden the Liberal Party of Ontario is taking the stand that they do not believe these five fundamental things are part of a teacher's job.

They do not believe that report cards, filling out report cards for kids, is a fundamental part of a teacher's job. I think if you asked Ontarians, or teachers in Ontario, they would all believe that that indeed is a fundamental part of the job. Administering tests to kids: the Liberal Party of Ontario has taken the position that administering tests is not part of a teacher's job, that they should be able to go to work, 9 to 3, stand in front of a classroom but not do report cards or administer tests, because it's not part of their job. We disagree with that.

The Liberal Party of Ontario is saying that teachers should not take part in graduation exercises. We disagree with that. That is something that teachers should be doing.

Transfer of marks and helping kids with co-op placements: again, we believe it's a fundamental part of what teachers could and should be doing. The Liberal Party of Ontario is opposed to that.

Parent-teacher meetings: the Liberal Party of Ontario, by blocking this bill, by keeping the kids in Toronto out of the classroom, is saying that one of the reasons they want to do that is that they do not believe that parent-teacher meetings are part of a teacher's job. They believe that's an extracurricular activity and we think that's incorrect. We think that is a fundamental part of a teacher's job.

So that's the rub. That's why, if everyone at home is saying, "Wow, we don't understand what's going on. If all three parties have passed back-to-work legislation before, what's the problem now?" it comes down to these five fundamental things. We have sat here and said to the

Liberals day after day, "Which of the five do you think they should do and which of the five do you think they shouldn't do? Just tell us. Is it that you don't think teachers should do report cards? If that's the case, then say it." None of them have actually said the words, "We're opposed to teachers doing those five things." But they continue to block the bill because of the clauses in the bill that allow us to do that.

I have agreed to divide my 20 minutes' time with the member from Waterloo-Wellington. By the look of the bill that was introduced, hopefully it will be Waterloo-Wellington-Kitchener in the near future. Since I'm splitting my time with him, I'm going to turn over the floor to the member now.

Mr Arnott: As we all know, and as even the members across the aisle are no doubt aware, the Toronto Catholic District School Board has locked out its elementary schoolteachers due to the inability of both sides to reach a mutually acceptable collective agreement. This situation needs to be resolved.

Bill 28 is legislation that, if passed, would allow teachers to go back into their classrooms. It is legislation that encourages teachers and the board to get back to the bargaining table. The Premier of Ontario has introduced this bill to protect our students' education and to get them back into the classroom, which is where they belong. Our children's education is a top priority, not only for the government but for all Ontarians. That is why we have taken this decisive action to ensure these students are able to complete their studies without the threat of a school-year disruption because of strikes, lockouts or so-called work-to-rule campaigns.

We believe we have listened to requests from parents and teachers alike. We have responded with proposed legislation that ensures teachers do things like completing report cards, participating in graduation ceremonies and parent meetings, administering EQAO testing, and maintaining co-op placements, all of which should be done.

This bill, if passed, would put 69,000 students back to school. It would stop the lockout, prevent work-to-rule campaigns from happening within that school board, and allow the school board and the union to work together to solve their differences and to solve this problem.

This bill would put students first, because as we should all agree, a lost day of instruction is a lost opportunity for success.

Unlike the opposition, our government believes that strikes, lockouts and work-to-rule campaigns in schools, even for one day, have a detrimental and deleterious effect on students, their parents and the general community.

Let's get the students of the Toronto Catholic board back in school, while the board and the union work to resolve their differences without impacting students in their classrooms. Let's put the interests of students ahead of disputes between adults.

The government has provided sufficient money—\$680 million—to school boards to allow for two 3% increases to teachers' salary benchmarks for the years 2002-03 and

2003-04. We have done our part. Now we expect the boards and the teachers' federations to do theirs.

We have heard from parents, students and teachers. They all feel powerless in these kinds of struggles. Surely no one in this House would say that this situation we're currently facing is a satisfactory one.

Parents want to know their children are getting the best education available. They want to see report cards and they want to see results. They want to know their kids are in a safe, stable learning environment. They want to be assured that if their children need extra help, it will be available to them. They want and expect to see their hard-earned tax dollars paying for their children's education, not for an ongoing power struggle between school boards and teachers' federations.

I'm told there are a lot of parents in Toronto who are losing sleep these days because of this dispute. They are scrambling to find daytime supervision for their children, and some are being forced to take time off work to do it themselves. And for what? So that unions and school boards can squabble over dollars and cents, while their children sit at home watching television? Parents are seeing their children's futures at risk with this ongoing labour dispute.

Parents want teachers back in the classroom, where they belong. They want teachers to provide the instruction their children need, the instruction their children deserve.

The vast majority of teachers want to return to the classroom too. They do not want to be locked out; I firmly believe that. They want to be in the classrooms with their students. They want to be doing what they are trained to do and what they are best at, and that is teaching.

In a study that was released today, the Ontario College of Teachers found that over 86% of first-year teachers feel they are making a difference in the lives of their students, and I am certain they are. These teachers do not want to be on strike or take actions they know are detrimental to the education and safety of their students. They don't want to be locked out either. They want to return to the classroom.

Our proposed legislation allows for this. It will return teachers to the classroom, while their union is still able to seek an agreement with the school board. It just makes sense.

Unfortunately, both parties involved in this labour dispute are playing a high-stakes game of poker, but no matter who wins, you can be sure the students will be the losers.

We simply can't allow these students to continue to be used as pawns in this ongoing labour dispute. Action must be taken. That is why we continue to call on all members of this House to come together for a speedy resolution of this unfortunate situation. We call on all members to support this legislation and to put the needs of students above all others.

The time for classroom disruption is over. Our continued goal is to ensure students receive the education

they deserve without the threat of school year disruptions because of strikes, lockouts and so-called work-to-rule campaigns.

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Our students' education is a top priority of the government. That is why we've continued to invest in the education system. This next school year we'll invest \$15.3 billion, which will increase to \$16.2 billion for the 2005-06 school year. We've also introduced Ontario students to a new and more rigorous curriculum and province-wide standardized testing to better prepare them to compete in today's global economy.

The government continues to demonstrate its commitment to education by trying to legislate a fair and amicable end to this ongoing labour dispute. I implore all members of this House to join us in this commitment to education and act to pass this legislation, Bill 28. Let's get those 69,000 children back into the classroom where they belong.

Mr Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to immediately put the question on both second and third readings of this bill at this time.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? I'm afraid I heard some noes.

Questions and comments?

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I'd like to respond to the member from Niagara. Let's recognize what has happened here. This Legislature has dealt with back-to-work legislation for teachers many times. There is a standard piece of legislation that could be introduced. The government, for its own political agenda, chose to introduce a different piece of legislation designed to inflame the situation. It is part of their platform, launched the exact same day the lockout started.

If you want to talk about politics, this is crass politics. What could have been done: the government could have chosen to introduce a straightforward piece of legislation that would have had every student back last week. But no, for their political agenda they decided that they would inflame the situation, that they would deliberately include in this legislation things we've never seen in legislation before, designed to prolong this dispute and to try to score political points. There is not a teacher in this province who does not want to go back to work and have those students back. But the government has chosen, for its own political gain, to inflame this situation.

I think it's tragic. I think it's unfortunate that rather than simply bring forward legislation all three parties have dealt with before, Mr Eves and his re-election group, I gather, have decided they're going to try to make this an election issue. They are once again doing what they said they would do: create a crisis. "Let's create a crisis." This is the Snobelen approach: you create a crisis yourself and then say, "There's only one solution." The public is not going to be fooled on this. I find it unfortunate that, tragically, we've got 69,000 students hostage to this political manoeuvring.

Mr Prue: I listened to the members from Niagara Falls and Waterloo-Wellington and—

Mr Kormos: Why?

Mr Prue: I don't know why. I guess because I was waiting for the last sentence where they tried again to sneak this bill through.

I listened with some awe, actually, because they keep repeating the same thing over and over. This is not about sending the kids back to school. It's about the five tests the teachers are going to have to meet in order for them to go back to work.

I would remind the members opposite that this is a lockout and not a strike. You are attempting to put the wounded party—that is, the teachers—back into the classroom with conditions, these same teachers who want to go back to the classroom, and you are completely ignoring the group that locked them out.

Where are your five conditions for the Toronto Catholic District School Board? Where are the conditions you are putting for that dysfunctional group that has locked out the teachers? Why aren't you telling the Catholic school board that as a condition of letting the teachers back to what they do, they have to bargain fairly? Why aren't you telling them they have to treat the teachers with respect? Why aren't you telling them they have to, for the first time in their mandate, listen to what the parents and students are telling them? You are including none of that in your back-to-school legislation. You are taking the teachers as a group and vilifying them because they happen to be members of a union, because they happen to stand up for their rights. You are not doing what you should be doing. If you are insisting upon conditions, put those conditions on the Catholic board. Put the conditions on the ones who have forced all of this. Or perhaps you don't want to do that because they are doing exactly what you have asked them to do. They are creating a crisis so that you, in the fullness of the debate within this House, can get to your own political agenda, something you won't do to the people themselves.

Mr McDonald: As I sit here and listen to the debate, let's face it, there are great teachers out there. I can remember a lot of good teachers at Widdifield high school in North Bay who were really committed to their students. I still hear from these great teachers who teach in North Bay and Mattawa. Let's face it: there are good teachers. There are great teachers.

What we're talking about here is the teachers' union leaders. Just go back a couple months, when the Minister of Education was going to speak at their convention. It was only a couple of them who started pushing and shoving her. Here's a bunch of males pushing and shoving a female Minister of Education. They put bags on their faces so they couldn't be identified. The teachers' union said, "We'll get to the bottom of it." Have we heard anything? We haven't heard anything.

Let's get to the bottom of this. The teachers want to teach, they want to help the students, they want to participate in extracurricular activities. They want to teach hockey, football, volleyball; they want to go to the graduations; and I would say almost all of them want to

write report cards. It's a few of the teachers' union leaders who are forcing the hard-working teachers who just want to help the kids. They're there for the kids. What they're trying to do is say we're against the teachers. This side of the House isn't against the teachers. We want to support the teachers. We have an issue with the teachers' union leaders who are forcing these teachers not to provide the services they want to provide to help the students in Ontario. Let's not play politics here. That's what you're playing. You're playing politics with the parents, the children and the teachers who want to help.

Mr Bryant: Unbelievable, just unbelievable, and I mean that. There is nothing that I've heard this afternoon from the government side that is believable to the public of Ontario. They are not being economical with the truth. There is just absolutely no truth in what I have heard this afternoon. Nothing.

The truth is, the government of Ontario set up an educational system such that they could starve the board. The board would be starved, then the board would negotiate with the union and there would be an agreement that there wasn't enough money, that the cupboard was bare because Queen's Park had put forth a one-size-fits-all, broken funding formula for the purpose of creating chaos.

And what happens next? In this case, the board, in a moment of extraordinary collusive coincidence, decides that it's going end this particular negotiation right around the time that the Tory commercials start running. What an extraordinary coincidence. Lo and behold, it is fulfilling the perfect agenda of desperation. It is desperate. When I go to the doors and get phone calls and e-mails from people, they say, "I can't believe how desperate this government has gotten." They so desperately want to hang on to power and win the election. I don't know why they want to win the election, because they have absolutely no agenda. They can't decide what their agenda is. A year ago it was a brokerage agenda from Ernie Eves, and now it's the Jim Flaherty approach to politics. Ernie Eves has turned out to be first a pale pink imitation of Dalton McGuinty, now a pale pink imitation of Jim Flaherty. Nobody in this province believes a word of what it's saying.

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The Speaker: Response?

Mr Maves: Folks at home in Toronto should call the member for St Paul's, who just sat down. They should call him and tell him, "Look, this bill was introduced May 21. My kids should have been back in school May 22. What are you doing?" They should call Mr Phillips from Scarborough-Agincourt and say, "This bill was introduced May 21. My kids should have been back in school May 22. What are you doing?" They should call Mr Prue and tell him the same thing.

Mr Prue in his comments said that the member for Waterloo-Wellington and I attacked the teachers. It's nothing of the sort. Go back and read Hansard. Not one of us attacked teachers at all. Not one of us called it a

strike at all. It's a labour impasse. It's a lockout. We know that right now. It's a labour impasse. It's affecting the kids. So we brought in the legislation to get the kids back in the classroom.

Mr Kormos has already agreed that the mediation-arbitration process set out in the bill is a good one. So vote for the bill.

What we continually ask is, which one of the five things—teachers doing report cards, teachers administering tests, teachers taking part in graduation exercises, teachers helping kids transferring marks and helping with co-op placements, and teachers doing parent-teacher meetings—do you believe are not essential to a teacher doing their job? You haven't told us yet. Since May 21 you haven't told us. So we're astonished by this. Everybody knows that those five items are all part and parcel of any teacher's job. Every teacher knows that.

We continue to put the question because we continue to be astonished and teachers continue to be astonished and Toronto parents continue to be astonished that the Liberals and the NDP will not give consent and get these kids back in the classroom.

The Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Smitherman: I want to say at the outset that I'll be sharing my time with the distinguished member for York South-Weston.

I also want to say at the beginning that I want to call attention to someone who's in the east members' gallery, and that's Rebecca Gordon. Rebecca Gordon has become well known to a lot of MPPs because she's a prolific sender of e-mails, and this week has made her presence felt by being here for part of this debate. I have a lot of respect for the positions she holds and the passion with which she expresses her views on behalf of her kids and others. She and I have a fundamental disagreement, and it's in a sense the same fundamental disagreement that I have with this government. While we would acknowledge, all of us, I think, that circumstances, including work-to-rule, are not ideal circumstances, I'm of the opinion that the time the kids were getting in the classrooms of the Toronto Catholic District School Board was time that was important, and that a lockout of teachers on work to rule is a worse circumstance than the work to rule itself.

I find it interesting that when the minister of security—Cowboy Bob, I like to call him—the member for Leeds-Grenville, was asked in scrums outside this House earlier today, "Why is it a tolerable circumstance to have work to rule in the Toronto police service while it's not tolerable to have those sorts of circumstances going on in our classrooms?" he had no answer. He did not address that. I think he didn't do that because the fact of the matter is that so far, at least in terms of any of the Tory platform which motivates this initiative that is before us now, this lockout of teachers that prevents them from teaching our kids in the classrooms—we haven't yet seen from the government a wedge that would work for them with respect to police.

Have no doubt about it: what we've seen in the last few months is the takeover of the head of the Premier by

the Premier-in-waiting, the real Premier, Jim Flaherty. Jim Flaherty is demonstrating that you can lose and yet still have all of the power. Because Jim Flaherty, the Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation—I'm not sure I got that in the right order—has become the government's idea factory. We sometimes like to talk about widgets, but he's become—

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Finance): That's Tony.

Mr Smitherman: We certainly know it's not you, Madam Minister.

He's become the wedge factory. Jim Flaherty, if nothing else, has the capacity to pop up a bunch of right-wing wedges. What we've seen as a result of that is that on the same day, the very same day, that this political party, which sometimes masquerades as a government, brought out their platform, they also worked with their friends at the Toronto District Catholic School Board to shut down the opportunities to be taught by teachers. As a result, 69,000 kids have found themselves in a situation where the classroom education that they were getting while teachers were on work-to-rule was ripped away from them by a school board working in cahoots with this government. This is a lockout and not a strike. The members opposite want people to forget that. They also want people to turn a blind eye to the very convenient link of the Toronto District Catholic School Board's initiative to lock the teachers out of the classroom and prevent those 69,000 kids from being taught, an extraordinarily convenient link to the fact that this is also a platform pledge of the government brought forward by the real Premier, Jim Flaherty.

I was there on February 12, 2002, at the London Convention Centre when the Tory leadership candidates, then in debate, all ganged up on Jim Flaherty. Poor Jim Flaherty. That was my birthday. I remember the night well. It snowed a little but it wasn't anything compared to the havoc that came down on Jim Flaherty's head by the combined mass of all those other prominent participants in the Tory leadership debate. On a rare point of unanimity among the challengers to Jim Flaherty, they came back and said with the wise voice of the former Treasurer, Ernie Eves, that ending the right to strike would cost the treasury of Ontario—get this—an additional \$700 million a year. But when 500 people of the right persuasion say in a public opinion poll that a policy is attractive to them, then every ounce of principle that candidates might have held before that seems to be eviscerated rather early.

John Snobelen, the former Minister of Education, said that he was going to go out and create a crisis in education. This government likes to say sometimes that they're just doing what they said they'd do. On that score, I'd have to agree with them. I think that the astonishing figure to memorize, for people listening in at home, is that under this government, under the Harris-Eves government, four times the rate of classroom disruption has occurred than under any other government in the history of the province of Ontario. Ontario's kids

have been put in a circumstance where they haven't been able to be taught at four times the rate of any other government in the history of the province. If a more damning fact exists, the extent to which these guys have created a crisis in public education in this province, I do not know of it.

So today, as I stand here as the elected voice for the kids who go to St Paul, St Michael and Our Lady of Perpetual Help, I say that I'm sorry. I'm sorry that as a public official I have been unable to do everything possible to date to keep you in the classroom. But I offer you a sign of hope as well, and that is that there are different attitudes in Ontario than the one that has been the prevailing attitude with respect to education for the last eight years.

I recently spent an hour and a half on a Friday afternoon at Rosedale Heights School of the Arts, where I talked to 80 or 90 kids, most of them about to leave that school, about their high school experience. The former Minister of Education, whose fingerprints are all over that, is here and I'm sure she'll want to heckle back at me. But unlike my high school experience, which was one of the most extraordinarily great periods in my life, these young people—in a failure of public policy led by this government, led by Ernie Eves and by Mike Harris, and by the Minister of Finance who was once a Minister of Education—been deprived of being able to look back on their high school careers with pride and with satisfaction because too many of them have become too hardened to the realities of being in the middle of a phoney war that was brought on by a government that set out a goal of creating a crisis in education.

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There's an opportunity every single day around here for political leadership, and on this point I'm awfully proud of the fact that while Ernie Eves was looking for an opportunity to manipulate this issue in his political favour, my leader, Dalton McGuinty, was on the phone to both sides in this debate.

Interjection.

Mr Smitherman: Oh, the member for Northumberland has awakened for one of his rare entrées into the debate. But the fact of the matter is that when political leadership is required, it should be delivered. In this case, it wasn't. There are other options. Those are options that are available now, just as they were available last week, and that is to bring a quick end to this lockout, to get those teachers back in the classroom and to give those 69,000 schoolchildren an opportunity to learn and to close out their school year in the hopes that their summer is not so tainted by the memory of what they have been put through.

I stand here as a person, as a member of provincial Parliament, who's enormously proud of the role that public education has played in creating the kind of society in downtown Toronto and across this province that makes me proud to be a Canadian. But I stand here as well feeling awfully diminished by having had to bear witness to this kind of phoney war that has taken 69,000

children, many of them my constituents, and relegated them to watching reruns on television instead of being given the advantage every single day of learning in the classroom. Before this government helped to manipulate that lockout, that's exactly what they were doing, and they will always bear that responsibility.

The Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Joseph Cordiano (York South-Weston): I want to inject something into this debate with regard to the views that might be held by parents, and by the children most of all. My kids are affected by this; they're at home. My wife is a teacher as well, and she's affected by this, not only as a teacher but a parent. But let me just say this: most parents must be shaking their heads with incredulity that this situation has been brought about simply because of politics, a desperate sort of act on the part of a government that really appears to be acting in desperation, looking and seeking an agenda which they do not have. Of course they're saying, "A pox on all of you." They're saying this because, time and again, this has been the ground for wars to take place, the kinds of political battles that have taken place throughout the years, that have been largely fought repeatedly on the education front. We get nowhere with it.

The fact of the matter is, this is a phoney war. It's a contrived war. Sections of the bill have been added to the Education Act that are controversial. Teachers have been performing these duties for many years. They don't need the government to tell them that they must perform these duties. They're part and parcel of being a teacher: filling out report cards, co-operating and assisting in the administration of—of course the EQAO tests are new, but they've done these sorts of things throughout their entire careers and for hundreds of years. Many of these things teachers have done because it's part of what they do; it's their duty, their being teachers. That's what they do.

At the end of the day, this dispute is contrived because really and truly, no one has talked about the fact that there is an inequity in the funding, particularly with Toronto boards, that has existed for some time. The Toronto boards were burdened with additional responsibilities: English as a second language, higher needs for special education. These were all requirements that took additional resources on the part of these boards.

The Toronto District Catholic School Board found itself without the money to play catch-up with respect to salaries with other GTA boards. As a result, their teachers find themselves getting behind the eight ball. They're not on the same level playing field as other GTA boards. This government, because of its per-pupil funding formula, has institutionalized that inequity and they've fallen behind. So the 6% that was given to the Toronto District Catholic School Board, along with every other board, is simply going to institutionalize the gap that was already there. It's going to continue. It won't be solved.

The board is playing a hard-line game, with the government. It's been playing up to the government, enabling the government to come forward with this despicable

agenda that will continue to inflame the situation between the board and teachers. It does nothing whatsoever to resolve the dispute. If we wanted to solve this dispute, we would have passed legislation that didn't contain these controversial measures. By the way, I say to people out there, we have not been sitting at night. We have not had night sittings. Let there be no doubt that it proves one thing: this government had no intention of quickly passing its own legislation. If they wanted to do that, we could have had two sessional days in one and we could have been sitting and debating this bill at night. They chose not to do that. There's another agenda at work here. It's a hidden agenda.

This is a Premier who said when he was first elected as Premier—by his own party, of course, not in an election campaign, chosen to be the leader of his party and thus the Premier of this province—that he was very much against the kind of acrimony we're seeing now with teachers. God knows where it's going to end up with other public sector workers. This is the kind of cynicism the public takes to heart. This is a Premier who said, "I'm going to govern differently. I'm going to do it differently. I'm going to bring parties together." Shades of Bill Davis, perhaps. This is a Premier I thought would do things differently by leaving behind the acrimony and the battles with teachers that took place with the previous Harris government. You haven't shown the respect that was required for teachers and nurses, and, by the way, for all public sector workers. This is what was injected: a Premier who said, "I'm going to do things differently. I'm going to broker consensus. I'm going to bring people together." What did he do? He jettisoned that idea completely because it wasn't working. His numbers were low in the polls. His numbers are so low he's afraid to call an election right now. That's the only reason. Do not be deceived. We would be having an election today and be on the campaign trail if this government's polling numbers were better and they had a chance to win the next election.

So out of desperation, this trumped-up election platform—which Jim Flaherty is proud of because I'm sure there's nothing in this platform that contradicts anything he said in his leadership campaign. At least he was straightforward and had a sense of purpose behind what he was doing, unlike the present Premier, who's all over the road map. He can't figure out from one day to the next. He's confusing his backbenchers from one day to the next. They're confused. I talk to them all the time.

Mr Kormos: They've been that way from day one.

Mr Cordiano: Well, they're more confused now than ever before, let's put it that way.

At the end of the day, this was a contrivance on the part of the government designed to ensure that we would be debating this bill at greater length, with no intention to pass it quickly, no intention to do what previous governments did, which was to end lockouts and strikes immediately, acting in the interests of children, acting in the interests of their school year—no intention to do that whatsoever.

The inequities that were there in terms of funding for the Toronto District Catholic School Board will continue to be institutionalized into the future as a result of what will be passed here eventually. That won't be resolved and teachers will continue to have, and rightfully so, some arguments to make with respect to the inequities that exist in their pay scales and in the responsibilities they have. The funding formula that this government imposed will see to that. In a very dictatorial fashion they have decided that teachers will do these things with regard to the five elements that are now contained in the Education Act that were not there before. They, from on high, will impose these requirements on teachers.

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Teachers have willingly undertaken these assignments in the past and probably will continue to do so in the future on a voluntary basis. They don't need to be told by a dictatorial government that they have to do this. It creates a continuing acrimonious situation in our schools, something we wanted to get away from, something we believed that this Premier wanted to get away from, something that hasn't happened as a result of a very cynical political agenda designed to divide people.

Once again we have wars taking place on the education front. Once again the children are held hostage. Once again they're victimized by this government. This is the way it is unfolding for the kids of this province, particularly for those children who are at home right now.

It doesn't hold any of us in high regard, because we should not inject partisan politics into this decision. It shouldn't be there, it shouldn't be present in this bill; it should be a back-to-work piece of legislation that is clean, that doesn't contain these controversial measures, and then you would see our support for a bill like that, one which we proposed anyway.

The Speaker: Questions and comments?

Hon Doug Galt (Minister without Portfolio): I was listening with considerable interest to the member from Toronto Centre-Rosedale and the member from York South-Weston commenting, and obviously they do not understand the problem. They're trying to make it as if it was a partisan-type problem, issue.

What has been going on, and maybe I can help clarify it for them: they've been there for work-to-rule, and finally the board got tired of this work-to-rule and locked them out. This is rather different than in previous situations, so why would a government pass a bill to have them go back to work to be doing the same thing they were already doing? That's what they're standing up and suggesting. I don't understand it. I don't follow their logic. I don't follow their reasoning. Why wouldn't a government put in there some other things, that they can't go back to work-to-rule? If they're going to go back to the classroom, they have to go back and do the full job, not just the work-to-rule that was going on before. So it makes perfect sense to me that the bill is written the way it has been written.

I'm really wondering what these two members will do as we move into the election. Will they be supporting the

Dalton McGuinty who came forward with a private member's bill to get rid of teachers' strikes or will they be following the Dalton McGuinty manipulated by the union and the position that he now has? I'm curious to see which Dalton McGuinty the Liberals will be following.

Hon Tim Hudak (Minister of Consumer and Business Services): Flip-flop.

Hon Mr Galt: That would be typical of a Liberal. You're absolutely right, Minister of Consumer and Business Services. He understands the flip-flop of the Liberals and just how they go about dealing with this. They'll try and follow both Dalton McGuintys, the one who wanted to eliminate teachers' strikes and now the one who is opposed to it.

Mr Kormos: It comes as no great surprise that the Conservatives don't understand, because I understand, you see, that the Conservatives don't like collective bargaining, Conservatives don't like teachers and Conservatives don't like publicly funded education. Why, they've gutted the funding of public education in this province. They've demonstrated a stronger commitment to private schools than to public education. They've shown disdain and contempt for teachers. But here we are with a remarkable course of events. This Legislature has a choice of back-to-work legislation from the Conservatives or back-to-work legislation written by the Liberals. My goodness, who's left to defend free collective bargaining? We knew that the Conservatives were fans of back-to-work, but now we discover the Liberals present, under the name of their education critic, a piece of back-to-work legislation.

This isn't designed to coerce the board into treating its teachers fairly in the course of negotiations. New Democrats say no: teachers deserve far better than what either the Conservatives or the Liberals offer them. Teachers deserve the right to freely bargain, to negotiate, without the threat of lockout, reinforced by a government that has worked in collusion, in collaboration with a board that has shown itself to be downright corrupt in its collusion with this government and the pursuit of this government's agenda, as this government purports to lay out the first stone in the foundation of its across-the-board denial of teachers and their right to freely collectively bargain.

We know what's next. We know that this government is also contemplating the abolition of school boards—no two ways about it. It doesn't surprise—

Applause.

Mr Kormos: Mr Flaherty applauds. I knew that's where he was. But we're going to fight it. We'll fight it till the end; we'll fight it till we win.

Mr O'Toole: I listened attentively to the member from York South-Weston on Bill 28. I've listened also to our Minister of Education, Elizabeth Witmer, and know her passion to have good relationships with the teachers and their professional association.

But I think the battle line has been drawn for some time. I think it's clear that the teachers' unions basically don't like this government and they have an agenda of their own. In fact, when I was a trustee many years ago

they had an agenda there. The member for York South-Weston would know that it was an issue in the 1980s as well, when you were government and they basically took you out as government.

The battle still goes on. In fact, one of the teachers brought this to my attention. This teacher had this in their staff mailbox. It was obviously put there by OECTA, the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association. I hate to use a prop, but it's shameful that in our schools they have politicized it for our children. At the end of the day I would say to you, Joe, that I understand that you're caught on this, because I appreciate some of the things you do. But even the chair of the Toronto separate school board, the Toronto Catholic board, who is clearly a Liberal, puts children first. In fact, I think he's vice-president of your riding association. That's fair, but I think he's doing the right thing. I'm just asking you to do the right thing by putting the children first.

I think that all the things in Bill 28 are natural, normal expectations of parents and students and I really believe that your government, the Liberal government under Dalton McGuinty, has opposed every opportunity. Even today our Minister of Education asked for unanimous consent to pass the bill, which would have put our children first and would have put our children back in the classroom for June to enjoy the last month of their school, and potentially the grade 8 students the last year for that particular experience.

I'm disappointed at the Liberals, again, that they put the unions before the students.

The Speaker: The member for Beaches-East York.

Mr Prue: I wasn't sure with the time left that I still had two minutes, but I'm glad that I do.

I listened to the two speakers, from Rosedale and from York South-Weston, and I've also heard some of the comments, particularly from the government members, and I wish to commend the two initial speakers because of what they brought home about the schools in their particular ridings. It made me stop to think about the Catholic schools in Beaches-East York, of which there are a few and dwindling in number. We had 10 and we'll have seven at the beginning of the school year. Three of the 10 will be closed by this very board, and you're attempting to talk about the great job they're doing and they in fact are doing your job for you—the same board that took two meetings in which to close down those schools; the same board where one of the members walked out and the parents had to go to court in order to have a fair hearing in front of their own trustees; the same board that doesn't listen to the parents; the same board that doesn't listen to the students; the same board that doesn't listen at all except to do what they want to do.

It made me stop to think about those days, when I went there to talk on behalf of the parents and the teachers and the students, to see 12 people, some of whom listened but the majority of whom did not.

I listened as well to what the chief government whip had to say. That was a struggle the teachers undertook for some three days before they were locked out: three days when they were trying to drive home the strength of their position by taking a stand. Every single school board in this province, every single group of teachers, in unions or not in unions, has used the same tactics and they have not been locked out. Why is it that the Toronto Catholic District School Board did it the day you came out with your agenda?

The Speaker: The member for York South-Weston.

Mr Cordiano: Let's be clear: if this were about getting the kids back in school, if that were the government's genuine first priority—let's say that everyone here agrees the kids ought to be back in school—then why wouldn't you introduce a bill that did not contain part II? Why would you not have had a bill like all previous governments brought about, a standard kind of back-to-work legislation that you knew very well would be supported by at least the Liberal Party? You knew that very well.

I understand where the New Democrats are coming from, and I respect that.

I knew where Jim Flaherty was coming from when he proposed his agenda when he ran for the leadership of your party. He was very clear and very straightforward about where he intended to take this province.

You can't say that about your present leader, the Premier. You have no idea where he's coming from. He's playing partisan politics at the worst possible time for the kids of this province. They are being affected by this. It's probably the best time for him to try to assert himself in a partisan way, because his numbers are so low. But let's not make any mistake; let's not kid ourselves. This was a cynical ploy on the part of this government to inject politics yet again into the arena of education. There's no mistaking that, not for one moment, because you thought it would be a vote-getter.

I don't think the public is buying it, because they're fed up with every single one of us who wants to play cheap partisan politics with kids and their education. They're fed up. They've had enough over the years. This is just another cynical ploy. You're not going to get away with this one, because it's too cynical.

The Speaker: It being actually a little past 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 on Monday.

The House adjourned at 1803.

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of Ontario**

Fourth Session, 37th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Quatrième session, 37^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 2 June 2003

Lundi 2 juin 2003



Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 2 June 2003

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 2 juin 2003

The House met at 1330.

Prayers.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): Linda Ouellette, a constituent of mine, has a dilemma. Imagine her amazement when she went to pick up the mail last Tuesday and found not one letter from the Premier of Ontario, not two letters from the Premier of Ontario, not three letters from the Premier of Ontario, not four letters from the Premier of Ontario, not five letters from the Premier of Ontario but six letters from the Premier of Ontario.

Linda Ouellette's message is simple to the government and to Ernie Eves: instead of wasting your money, our money, taxpayers' money on this senseless, ridiculous propaganda, put it toward our hospital; put it toward people who really need it.

The fact is, this government under Ernie Eves proves its inefficiency every single, solitary day. Linda Ouellette is but one example of many across the province of Ontario who are receiving this junk mail. She wants it stopped. The people of Sudbury want it stopped. The people of Ontario want it stopped.

Dalton McGuinty wants it stopped. The Liberals are the only party to ensure that this kind of junk mail will cease once we form the government. We're saying to the government, show your efficiency and show your feelings to the people of Ontario. Put the money where it's needed, not in self-serving propaganda.

MISSING CHILDREN

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre): Last Sunday, May 25, marked National Missing Children's Day. Though it is a very difficult subject about which to speak, I wanted to officially recognize the hard work and commitment of Child Find Ontario.

Each year, over 66,000 cases of missing children are reported in Canada, enough to fill every seat in Sky-Dome. This is a staggering number. These children and teenagers are classified as runaways, wandered off or are the victims of parental or stranger abduction. Thankfully, over 90% of these children are recovered but, regrettably, as was seen in Toronto recently, these cases sometimes end in tragedy.

It is the responsibility of all of us to protect the most vulnerable in our society. We can achieve this through

making our communities safer, teaching our children the rules of safety and by providing police officers the tools that are necessary to help keep our children safe.

The green ribbon is a symbol of hope and a reminder of the importance of child safety practices. It is worn to recognize the vital role that we all play in child safety, to remember those who have not yet been found and to reinforce the efforts that are put into the safe return of those who are dearest.

I wish to encourage all Ontarians to wear a green ribbon and to recognize the work of Child Find Ontario, not just during the month of May each year but throughout the entire year. If we work as a community, we can help find these missing children, and together we can help stop tragedies from happening.

ITALIAN NATIONAL DAY

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): Today commemorates Italian National Day. It was on June 2, 1946, when the people of Italy voted to abolish the monarchy and establish a democratically elected assembly and create a republic. This step made Italy a staunch democracy. Today, Italy is a leading industrial nation, a founding member of the European Union and a vital strategic partner in NATO. The Italian consul general is hosting a reception tonight to celebrate this history.

In the early 1950s, Ottawa entered into a bilateral agreement with Rome to process large-scale Italian immigration to Canada and there followed an aggressive Italian labour recruitment for the Canadian market. The year 1958 saw 28,500 Italians immigrate to Canada. This surpassed the number of British immigrants.

Canadians of Italian origin are one of the largest immigrant groups to settle in Canada. This has had a significant impact on the cultural, political and economic sectors in this country.

Next week, on June 12, the first major national exhibition on the heritage and day-to-day lives of Italian-Canadians will open at the Canadian Museum of Civilization. The exhibition, *Presenza*, gives voice to a generation of Italian-Canadian immigrants from across the country.

It is important that we celebrate a heritage as being part of us as Canadians.

SENIORS' MONTH

Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington): I am pleased today to rise in recognition that June is Seniors' Month. It has been my practice in my community of Burlington for

the last 17 years to host a very major seniors' seminar that will be occurring this year on Saturday, June 7, at the Burlington Seniors' Centre, 2285 New Street in Burlington. The doors will open at 9:30, and we'll be providing refreshments throughout the day.

This year we're pleased to announce that our headliner for this year's show is Mr Entertainment from the province of Ontario, Gordie Tapp. His humour has been entertaining generations of people all across North America, and he's going to be very warmly received. It's his fourth visit to our seniors' seminar.

We'll also have representatives from the Ontario Residential Care Association. Jill Davies will inform people about retirement home living, and Karen Stewart from Sheridan College's gerontology program will do a presentation on the myths of aging.

We have representatives from the police and fire departments to help seniors better understand how to safety-proof their homes and how to avoid being victims of fraud.

Admission is free. If anyone would like to attend, they can call our constituency office at 905-639-7924. We get 400 to 500 people out every year, so call today and get your tickets.

ROAD SAFETY

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): In October 2002, I wrote the Minister of Transportation regarding turning lanes at Lake Huron Drive in Desbarats.

In late 2002, I wrote to the Minister of Transportation supporting a resolution from Verna Lapish of the Bar River Women's Institute. In my letter of support, I asked that the ministry install flashing amber lights at the intersection of Highway 17 and Kensington Road in Desbarats. This intersection provides road access to Central Algoma Secondary School, a school with 650 students.

Minister Sterling acknowledged the need for improvements in a letter of January, which stated simply, "Improvements are needed."

On March 6 of this year, the community's concerns became reality with a tragic accident that resulted in the death of 16-year-old student Josh Brockelbank and severe injuries to other passengers in the vehicle. The vehicle was rear-ended by a transport truck as the victims' vehicle attempted to make a legal left-hand turn at Main Street.

The minister has received hundreds of letters from students from CASS and from Johnson Tarbutt public school, parents, teachers, municipal councils, the school board and myself. I've met with Reeve Elwood McKinnon, his council, the school board trustee and other concerned citizens.

We want action, and we want action now. We can do the following now: we can declare the area a school zone. We can install rumble strips to slow traffic and heighten their awareness. We can install an amber flashing light at

Kensington Road. We can reduce the speed limit. We can increase the police presence in the area.

1340

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I attended a press conference hosted by several environmental leaders in this province who said that the government's Bill 25, the so-called An Act to enhance public transit and provide for a smart transportation system in Ontario, if proceeded with, will actually be dumb growth.

I'm one, even in the opposition, to say good things about this government very occasionally if they do something right. I'm on record as saying that their Smart Growth panels were a good idea, including the public and being able to reach consensus on smart growth. But today we find out from these leading environmentalists that in fact it's all been a scam; it's been put on to fool the people of Ontario, to make them believe the government actually cares about environmental planning in this province.

If this bill goes through—and these people are calling for the government to pull it and start all over again—it will mean that transportation corridors and major infrastructure such as power plants as well as highways are no longer defined as undertakings and will be excluded from the 25-year-old practice of applying the Ontario Environmental Assessment Act to their planning.

Even Debbe Crandall, who is a member of the government-appointed central Smart Growth panel that made the recommendations, and whose environmental group fought to preserve the Oak Ridges moraine, said, "We no longer have any voice on protecting the environment." Others said the same thing. A mayor is taking the government to court over this.

I demand that the government pull the bill and start all over again if they're committed to real smart growth, not dumb growth, in this province.

HUNTSVILLE SPORTS HALL OF FAME

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): This past Saturday, the Huntsville Sports Hall of Fame in my riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka inducted the following new members for their achievements and support of the athletic community.

John Clayton's impressive lacrosse career began as the youngest member of the Huntsville 1965 junior B champions and as a member of four of Oshawa's Minto Cup championship teams. John Clayton then received a university-level hockey scholarship.

Andy Longpre won four Muskoka-Parry Sound high school wrestling championships and two OFSSA championships. He then joined the University of Guelph team and the national team. Andy Longpre continued his dedication to the sport as a coach.

R.T. "Ginger" Davies was a supporter of minor league lacrosse and hockey. Mr Davies served the sport and local clubs in many ways, ranging from treasurer to timekeeper. His commitment and service were highly valued and he was a major force in the building of these clubs.

Dave Arnold was a member of the national gymnastics team, including the 1983 Pan Am bronze medallists. Dave Arnold went on to coach and judge nationally and internationally, participating in a long list of top-level competitions resulting in an extraordinary list of awards and honours.

The late fire chief of Huntsville, Ross Payne, received the Jack Bionda award for outstanding commitment to the Huntsville sporting community. Mr Payne played on the Ontario champion 1949 Huntsville Hawks lacrosse team. He went on to further make his mark as an executive member, official and loyal fan of Huntsville and Burk's Falls sports teams.

I would like to commend all these recipients for their roles in making amateur sport an important and valuable part of daily life in the Huntsville area.

AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): Thursday morning, our livestock industry learned that their minister was looking at closing provincial borders to all outside beef. A national furor ensued. The minister went on in typical Tory tradition to point blame everywhere but in the mirror, claiming she was following PEI and Quebec's lead. Reaction was fast and furious.

PEI ag minister Mitch Murphy accused Johns of "grossly misrepresenting the Island's position." Alberta minister McClellan was "totally blindsided and very disappointed." Premier Klein publicly mused whether this was for real or whether our minister was just "flap-ping off."

Sadly, this kind of knee-jerk, thinking-out-loud, shoot-from-the-hip governing is the last thing an industry in crisis needs. The Ontario Cattlemen's Association and the Ontario Federation of Agriculture were swift to contradict their minister, hoping for damage control as Ms Johns was forced to apologize.

This is the kind of mistake that can have possible permanent implications, and shows a complete lack of understanding of the very nature of Ontario's industry by its very own minister.

The Globe and Mail refers to Ms Johns as "one of the most hapless ministers of the crown that her province has produced in recent years." The National Post surmises that "Johns was either speaking from ignorance or fear, neither of which is much of a sound base for public policy," and that "she might as well have been belching, for all the forethought that went into her remarks."

If the minister is in so deep over her head that she has to resort to making up policy on the fly, the minister should step aside.

PETERBOROUGH REGIONAL HEALTH CENTRE

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): I'm pleased to inform members of the House about a new era in health care in my riding of Peterborough. On Friday, May 30, the Honourable Tony Clement, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, announced \$176 million in provincial funding by the Ernie Eves government at the official construction launch of the new Peterborough Regional Health Centre.

The total cost of the project is estimated at \$255.9 million. Local funding initiatives and commitments from the city and the county have already resulted in \$47 million toward the construction of this wonderful new health centre.

This new state-of-the-art health facility will replace the existing hospital that was built in 1947. It is designed to accommodate 529 beds—a 30% increase from the current capacity—and will feature an expanded out-patient department, operating rooms, acute care services, mental health beds, rehabilitation services etc. The emergency department will service an incredible 26,000 more emergency room visits every year.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank Premier Eves, Minister Clement, the hospital administration and all front-line health care providers, but especially the residents of Peterborough riding for their support and commitment to this hospital. It will ensure that our community will continue to have access to quality health care for the road ahead.

VISITORS

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: We have a rather special occasion. The Lewis clan is here to see their son Timothy Lewis, one of our pages, in action. I want to welcome Jamie and Jane Lewis, Kristin and David, June and Jim Lewis and Linda Carandang, who are here to see Timothy. Thank you for coming today.

Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'm privileged to advise all members that we have with us in the members' gallery today several members of the family of the late Doug Kennedy, who was the former MPP for Peel South and Mississauga South from 1967 to 1985. As you know, Doug passed away last Monday. Members from all parties will be paying tribute to him shortly.

Please join me in welcoming the members of Doug's immediate family. His wife Kay wanted to come, but then decided she could not be here. We have Doug's daughter, Pat Bond, and her husband Robert; his other daughter, Janet Graham, and her husband Brian; and his granddaughter, Amie Reid, who also served in this House as a page in 1983. We're very grateful they're here today.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I'm sure you would want to know that a former member from Etobicoke North, Mr Ed Philip, is here along with his

wife and their little girl, Sarah. I'd like to welcome them to the chamber.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I'll just add, because I had that to do, that Mr Philip, of course, was the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale in the 32nd through the 35th Parliaments. He's joined today, beside him, by former member Barbara Sullivan, who was the member for Halton Centre in the 34th and 35th Parliaments. Please welcome both our colleagues.

Hon Doug Galt (Minister without Portfolio): It's certainly a pleasure for me to introduce the family of Spencer Henderson, who is a page with us from Cobourg: his parents, Donna and John Henderson; his brother and sister, Simon and Devon; along with his grandmother, Marguerite Fluker. Please join me in welcoming them to Queen's Park.

The Speaker: We also have with us today in the Speaker's gallery a parliamentary delegation from the Moscow region, led by the deputy chair of their Duma. Please join me in welcoming our honoured special guests from Russia.

1350

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

HEALTH INSURANCE AMENDMENT ACT (SUPPLEMENTAL NEWBORN SCREENING), 2003

LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'ASSURANCE-SANTÉ (DÉPISTAGE COMPLÉMENTAIRE DES NOUVEAU-NÉS)

Mr Duncan moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 71, An Act to amend the Health Insurance Act /
Projet de loi 71, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'assurance-santé.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All in favour will please say "aye."

All opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

The member for a short statement?

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): Many infants and children unknowingly suffer from medium-chain acyl-CoA dehydrogenase deficiency, which may be the cause of 100 infant deaths thought to be SIDS or Reye's. Families in Ontario are aware of the importance of expanding their newborn screening of fatty oxidation disorders and other metabolic disorders that can be detected through tandem mass spectrometry. This procedure is currently conducted in British Columbia, Saskatchewan and Nova Scotia. The sample taken at birth for PKU testing is the same sample that can be used to test for FOD and other disorders. Supplemental newborn screening for FODs could detect MCAD and allow children to live normal lives through treatment.

PHYSICAL FITNESS DAY ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 SUR LA JOURNÉE DE L'APTITUDE PHYSIQUE

Mr O'Toole moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 72, An Act proclaiming Physical Fitness Day /
Projet de loi 72, Loi proclamant la Journée de l'aptitude physique.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): The intention of introducing this bill is to stress the importance of personal responsibility in our own health. In that respect, physical fitness is an important contributor to health. I move that the first Friday in September of each year would be deemed Physical Fitness Day.

FAMILY RESTROOM FACILITIES ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 SUR LES INSTALLATIONS SANITAIRES FAMILIALES

Mr Parsons moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 73, An Act to facilitate families by requiring that all buildings open to the public be equipped with family restroom facilities / Projet de loi 73, Loi visant à assister les familles en exigeant que tous les bâtiments ouverts au public soient équipés d'installations sanitaires familiales.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

The member for a short statement?

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): This is a reintroduction of a bill from the previous session which provides for young families and for persons with disabilities access to a washroom where others can be present to assist. It will apply to public buildings and to private buildings such as shopping centres, arenas and stadiums that have significant public access.

SAFETY IN HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION ZONES STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LA SÉCURITÉ DANS LES ZONES DE CONSTRUCTION DE LA VOIE PUBLIQUE

Mr Hoy moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 74, An Act to improve safety in highway construction zones by amending various Acts to implement the recommendations from the inquest into the death of Dick Van Rooyen / Projet de loi 74, Loi visant à

améliorer la sécurité dans les zones de construction de la voie publique en modifiant diverses lois pour mettre en oeuvre les recommandations faisant suite à l'enquête sur le décès de Dick Van Rooyen.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): This is a re-introduction of a previous bill of mine. This bill implements all the recommendations made by the coroner's jury as a result of the inquest into the death of Dick Van Rooyen. This bill calls for increased fines and loss of demerit points. There are also provisions to use police to protect the safety of workers, and the bill requires the closure of the travel portion of controlled-access highways while the work is being done, with the diverting of traffic to the other side of the highway.

ONTARIO DISABILITY SUPPORT PROGRAM AMENDMENT ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LE PROGRAMME ONTARIEN DE SOUTIEN AUX PERSONNES HANDICAPÉES

Mr Parsons moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 75, An Act to amend the Ontario Disability Support Program Act, 1997 to empower the Integrity Commissioner to determine the level of income support /
Projet de loi 75, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur le Programme ontarien de soutien aux personnes handicapées en vue de donner au commissaire à l'intégrité le pouvoir de déterminer le niveau de soutien du revenu.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): Again, this is a reintroduction of a previous bill that amends the Ontario Disability Support Program Act, 1997, to empower the Integrity Commissioner to make recommendations concerning the level of income support to be set by the Lieutenant Governor in Council under the program and the time and manner of providing it.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I understand that this is the reintroduction of another bill. I still would ask that it be reviewed by yourself with respect to revenue implications. Unless the member is suggesting, if the Integrity Commissioner reviews it, that he would be offering a reduction in levels of support, I don't see how this is anything but a revenue bill.

The Speaker: I thank the member. As you know, we will review it, as we do all the bills, for appropriateness and, if so, we will report back.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): I move that pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 pm to 9:30 pm on Monday, June 2, and Tuesday, June 3—pardon me, Marilyn?

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): Finally we're sitting nights.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Thank you so much.

Monday, June 9, and Tuesday, June 10; Monday, June 16, and Tuesday, June 17; Monday, June 23, and Tuesday, June 24, 2003, for the purpose of considering government business.

With the heckling of my friend Ms Churley, I would only presume she's voting in favour of this motion.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Mr Stockwell has moved—dispense? Dispense.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1359 to 1404.

The Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Agostino, Dominic	Eves, Ernie	O'Toole, John
Arnott, Ted	Flaherty, Jim	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Baird, John R.	Galt, Doug	Parsons, Ernie
Barrett, Toby	Gilchrist, Steve	Patten, Richard
Bartolucci, Rick	Gill, Raminder	Peters, Steve
Beaubien, Marcel	Hardeman, Ernie	Phillips, Gerry
Bountrogianni, Marie	Hoy, Pat	Pupatello, Sandra
Boyer, Claudette	Hudak, Tim	Ramsay, David
Bradley, James J.	Jackson, Cameron	Runciman, Robert W.
Bryant, Michael	Johns, Helen	Ruprecht, Tony
Caplan, David	Johnson, Bert	Sampson, Rob
Chudleigh, Ted	Kells, Morley	Sergio, Mario
Clark, Brad	Klees, Frank	Smitherman, George
Clement, Tony	Kwinter, Monte	Sorbara, Greg
Coburn, Brian	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Spina, Joseph
Colle, Mike	Levac, David	Sterling, Norman W.
Crozier, Bruce	Marland, Margaret	Stewart, R. Gary
Cunningham, Dianne	Martiniuk, Gerry	Stockwell, Chris
Curling, Alvin	Maves, Bart	Tasca, Joseph N.
DeFaria, Carl	Mazzilli, Frank	Tsubouchi, David H.
Di Cocco, Caroline	McMeekin, Ted	Turnbull, David
Dombrowsky, Leona	Miller, Norm	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Duncan, Dwight	Molinari, Tina R.	Wilson, Jim
Dunlop, Garfield	Munro, Julia	Witmer, Elizabeth
Ecker, Janet	Mushinski, Marilyn	Young, David
Elliott, Brenda	Newman, Dan	

The Speaker: All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Bisson, Gilles	Kormos, Peter	Prue, Michael
Churley, Marilyn	Martel, Shelley	
Hampton, Howard	Martin, Tony	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 77; the nays are 7.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

DOUG KENNEDY

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I believe we have unanimous consent for all parties to have up to five minutes to comment on the passing of my uncle Doug Kennedy, a former member of this House.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is there unanimous consent? Agreed? Agreed.

Mr Chudleigh: Doug Kennedy was a man much loved by his constituents and members of this House alike. To understand Doug Kennedy, I think you also have to know where he came from and to understand the adversity and the joy that was his youth.

He was a born on farm in the village of Dixie, in what is today part of Mississauga. When Doug was 13, his father passed away, leaving his wife, Evelyn, with nine children: seven boys and two girls. Doug was a true Canadian of his era, because at the early age of 11 he fell forward playing hockey and knocked out one of his front teeth and ever since was identified of course as a Canadian hockey player.

Growing up on a poor farm in the Depression of the 1930s was not easy, and thank goodness his mother, Evelyn, was a resourceful woman and a keen entrepreneur of the day. You can imagine the trouble the seven Kennedy boys would get into on any given day. Today we might suggest that you could make a soap opera out of these goings-on. Well, in the middle of the Dirty Thirties, his mother did. Of course, these were the days before TV and so a radio serial show had to take its place. She wrote to CFRB, CBC and CKEY, and was eventually accepted by all three. On Saturday mornings, the 9 kids would pile into their 1927 Pontiac and head for Toronto along the Dundas highway. With nine kids in the car, I am sure you could have had a whole season's worth of shows just on the trip into town alone. The family came up with the subject of the show, Doug would type the script and the show would air live. After all, there was no taping in those early days of radio. Apparently, the younger members would quite often flub their lines, but that only seemed to make the show better.

One such show was about bringing in straw used for bedding in the barn. After the wagon was loaded, the best place to ride was on top of all the straw, where it was nice and cool and you got a nice breeze. That's where Doug was. His next youngest brother, Arthur, wanted Doug to get down. He wanted to get up there. He told Doug he had a match and Doug had better get down right away. Doug ignored him and soon the straw was engulfed in fire. The fire truck arrived from Port Credit to put out the fire and save the barn, which was only about 50 feet away. Luckily, the fire brigade knew the way to the Kennedy farm well, and there was no wind that particular day. Some two years later, the barn did burn

down, but due to spontaneous combustion in the hay-mow, not to one of the boys. One day Gordon, Doug's oldest brother, bought firecrackers from the local store left over from the May 24th celebrations. He kept them upstairs in a cupboard. Hal, the second youngest, wanted to see if those fireworks still worked, so he dropped a match in the box. Well, the fire department had to chop a hole in the roof to get that fire out.

1410

Doug was about 13 when he was enjoying doing odd jobs and chores on the farm. They had a very tame team of horses, which was referred to as a drowsy team in those days, and he was mowing hay on a very drowsy, warm day in June. As Doug would tell the story, on a drowsy day and with a drowsy team, he was holding the reins very limply in his hands. Suddenly, the horses bolted—a bee sting or something—and headed for the barn, which unfortunately was two fields away. The reins were jerked from his hands, and he held on to his seat for all it was worth. The horse and mower hit a small ditch, and when the mower came down, Doug was hanging on to the toolbox with his legs dragging behind the mower. The horses were heading for a gap in the headland on their way to the barn, and Doug knew there was a big rock in the gap. He swung around parallel and let go, rolling to a stop, unhurt. The horses passed through the gap, but the mower was smashed on the rocks. Life on the farm was never dull, and there were always lots of stories for the radio show.

Doug graduated from Port Credit high school and the Ontario Agricultural College, earning a bachelor of science degree in agriculture.

I mentioned his mother, Evelyn, being a very resourceful lady. She managed to get four of her seven boys through university. Doug graduated in 1940 from the Ontario Agricultural College and, of course, enlisted in the service, where he served for four and a half years. After that, he worked with returning veterans on the Veterans' Land Act, helping returning vets get established on farms across Ontario. He also served on the board of education in Peel and on the hydro commission before being elected to this Legislature.

Doug Kennedy was a man who served his country, a man who served his community and a man who served his province. Doug loved his family. God bless you, Doug. We'll miss you.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I had the privilege of serving, in my early days in the Ontario Legislature, with Doug Kennedy. I think all of us who were here at that time recognized him as a very popular member of this Legislature as well as a person who was beloved by his constituents because of a genuine concern for his constituents. He had that combination, which is sometimes difficult to achieve, of being a very thorough, complete and assiduous constituency person while at the same time making a contribution within the legislative precinct, particularly in committees. Doug was selected by his party to serve on a number of what I would call significant select committees of the Legislature. As I look

at a former House leader across from me, my friend Mr Sterling, I must say that those were the good old days, Norm, of select committees, where specific items were put before members of the Legislature and they could concentrate on those and bury their partisan hatchets a little bit for a while and come up with a report. Doug was very good in that regard. Yes, he was a strong and loyal Conservative, but he was also an individual who could see the viewpoint of members of the other political parties and tended to be a person around whom you could coalesce in terms of what he had to say.

Unlike most in the Legislature now because of age, Doug served in the armed forces. I don't know if anybody in this House at this time has served in the armed forces, but he did serve in the armed forces. When his country called upon him, he was certainly prepared to serve in the armed forces and was very loyal to his country. I think that was the case. I remember he was from Mississauga, and I was talking to Margaret Marland the other day about this incident. Members of the government may not know this—particularly the newer members—but in those days, government members didn't ask questions. You know how they now ask what some might define, unfairly of course, as lob-ball questions, easy questions for the ministers—I've seen that with three different political parties, so I can say it's not unique to this government. Doug Kennedy, I remember, got up and asked a question, which was quite unique in the government benches at that time. Very few questions came from the government benches. They had to be recognized by the Speaker; there was not a rotation where the government members were entitled to ask a question.

I remember there was an issue that was very significant to his constituents in Mississauga, and Doug was prepared to get up in the House and ask the Premier of the province a question about it. I can tell you he didn't pull his punches when he asked that question. It was something rather revealing for the government, and the opposition of course was delighted that a government member was prepared to do that.

As I mentioned, Doug was very interested in a number of fields within this precinct. One was education, and it was because of his background. He used to talk about his days on the local board of education and on the local hydro commission as two areas where he had gathered some expertise at the local level, on the front line if you will, and was able to utilize that expertise when he got to the House as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education from 1976 to 1981.

The routine today is to move parliamentary assistants much more, but the Ministers of Education of the day appreciated Doug's expertise and support, and he managed to stay on as parliamentary assistant for the period from 1976 to 1981, and then in intergovernmental affairs, which was important because we were always involved and engaged in matters of national importance. The Premier and the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs both required a person with his expertise and diplomacy

to be in intergovernmental affairs, and he was involved in that as parliamentary assistant in both the Davis cabinet and the Miller cabinet.

I notice he was on the Ontario Committee on Taxation. It was a select committee in 1968, an important committee and, I must say, one that has been there for a long time. Different governments have tried committees on taxation, and they've had varying results in terms of the reports being implemented.

He was a member of the select committee on economic and cultural nationalism in Canada from 1971 to 1975. He was on the select committee on highway safety—and Mr Sterling, as a former minister, and other ministers who have been involved with transportation would know that some of the ideas Doug came forward with were exceedingly important—and then on the Inco and Falconbridge layoffs.

Obviously Doug Kennedy's early days remained etched in his mind: his concern, his compassion for his constituents, his recognition that a lot of hard work is required by an individual to succeed when coming from a modest or perhaps financially poor background, that that is necessary, and he showed those attributes.

For 18 years the Legislature of Ontario was pleased to have Doug Kennedy as a member, as were his constituents, who were very loyal to him. He was not an individual who was invited to leave; he was an individual who left of his own volition at the point in time he felt was appropriate for himself.

To members of the family, to the constituents of Doug Kennedy, who will remember him fondly, we all offer our condolences, our sadness at his passing but our happiness that he was a contributor to our society and particularly to our province and his constituency.

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): It is my honour to stand here today to speak about Robert Douglas Kennedy, a man I unfortunately never had an opportunity to personally meet. I remember, though, coming here as a much younger man, when I was a student at the University of Toronto, just across the street, and watching the debates from 1967 to 1972. I remember when he became the chief government whip. I remember all too well those days. They were fractious, but I don't think quite as fractious as today. I remember Mr Kennedy speaking passionately in this Legislature for what he believed in.

He was a man whom I think all of us would admire and all of us would wish to have known. He served four and a half years in the Canadian Armed Forces, serving his country in times of war, and he rose to the rank of captain.

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After the war he did what most veterans did: they came back and tried to re-establish their lives. He took it upon himself to work for the federal government. I can empathize with that because I myself worked there for some 20 years. He worked helping veterans with the Veterans' Land Act and the Farm Credit Corp, and he did so with distinction and honour, choosing to leave only at

the time that he was seeking elective office to the Legislature of Ontario.

He served his community at the board of education from 1955 to 1963, and also at the Toronto Township Hydro Commission from 1963 to 1967. He knew and understood the people of Mississauga. He knew and understood local government.

In 1967, the centennial year, he was elected to the Legislature of the province. He was elected four more times after that. It is trite to say that he knew the people of Mississauga, and the people of Mississauga knew and trusted him. They elected him each and every time, no matter what the fortunes of his particular party. Whether it went up or down, he was there. They voted for him, they trusted him, and he spoke for them.

One has to look at what he accomplished as an MPP. I think his biggest accomplishment probably came at the time he was the chief government whip. He got the whip to be included in cabinet meetings and to be recognized within this Legislature for the important role that person takes on.

As a private member, he also introduced many bills. I don't know how successful they were but I do know that if you read what his private bills were, what his passions were when he was not constrained by the Legislature or by the party, he did an awful lot of things we can all be very proud of today. He tried to protect the personal privacy of Ontarians through personal privacy act changes. He tried—and succeeded, I believe—to get parking for the disabled. This was 20 or 30 years ago when one did not see disabled stickers everywhere and one did not see them in parking lots or on the streets. He also tried, unsuccessfully—and I think we may come to revisit it soon—a ban on non-returnable bottles, being a true environmentalist who realized how bad those non-returnable bottles are for the environment.

He leaves behind his wife, four children, 10 grandchildren and 12 great-grandchildren. In so doing, I think he leaves them not only with sorrow in their hearts that he is gone but a proud memory of a husband, a father, a grandfather and a great-grandfather who has truly made a remarkable contribution to the people of this province and this country. He served his country, his province and his community in times of war, he served them in times of peace, he made a mark on history and he fought throughout for what he believed.

I am reminded of a line from II Timothy, which I'm going to paraphrase: he fought the good fight, he finished the course, he kept the faith, and we are all thankful that he did so.

The Speaker: I thank all members for their kind words. I will ensure that copies of the Hansard go to the family.

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): Mr Speaker, on a point of order: I seek unanimous consent for second and third reading of Bill 56, which is the Tommy Douglas patients' bill of rights.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? I'm afraid I heard some noes.

ORAL QUESTIONS

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Ms Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): My question is for the Premier. Premier, in November 2000, the cabinet appointed Mr Don Weiss both chair and CEO of the Ontario Pension Board. This board oversees the pensions of 66,000 current and former provincial employees. Under the law, the province is responsible for any deficit in this plan.

Before his appointment as the head of the Ontario Pension Board, Don Weiss was the executive director of the PC Ontario fund. Don Weiss was your biggest fundraiser. The Ontario Pension Board oversees \$11 billion in the pension fund. Is it appropriate to have the party's top fundraiser in a position to make investment decisions with taxpayer-guaranteed money? Premier, did you not see the potential for conflict when you and the cabinet approved this decision?

Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I think appointments are based on the ability of the individual who's being considered for the office.

Ms Pupatello: Beginning in October 2002, the Ontario Pension Board provided mortgages totalling more than \$150 million for a land deal in Brampton. I have copies of the titles and mortgages here: \$27 million to MCN Heritage in October; \$79 million to MCN Financial later that month; \$21 million to MCN Heritage in January; \$22 million more to MCN Heritage in February. All of these companies are owned and operated by Mario Cortellucci. Mario Cortellucci is the single biggest donor to the Ontario PC Party. Premier, could you please explain how you see your biggest fundraiser making a \$150-million deal with your biggest donor using taxpayer-guaranteed pension money as appropriate?

Hon Mr Eves: I think the Chair of Management Board can respond to that question.

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Culture): I'd like to address the first part of the question. Mr Weiss appeared twice before the standing committee on government agencies. As we all know, this is an all-party committee, chaired by the official opposition. Before going to the Ontario public service pension board, Mr Weiss had a 30-year career in the financial services field.

Mr Gregory S. Sorbara (Vaughan-King-Aurora): How come he's lending money to Cortellucci?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: Despite the yapping from the member from Vaughan-King-Aurora, when Mr Weiss appeared before the committee, Gerry Phillips from Scarborough-Agincourt, who is the critic for finance, said to him, "I have no doubts about your professional credentials." This is in Hansard, March 27, 2000. Clearly, as the Premier has said, Mr Weiss has the qualifications to deal with the pension fund.

Ms Pupatello: Premier, I would like to direct a question back to you. Your biggest fundraiser made a \$150-million deal with your biggest donor using taxpayer-guaranteed money. According to Professor Robert MacDermid at York University, Mario Cortellucci and his companies have donated more than \$1 million to the PC Party and leadership candidates since 1995. He owns Adams mine. Here's what Professor MacDermid said about big donors like Mario Cortellucci: "When you are giving huge sums of money to help political parties get elected, the perception, quite naturally, is that you are expecting something in return."

Mr Cortellucci gave your fundraisers \$1 million. Your biggest fundraiser lent him \$150 million—every penny of it guaranteed by Ontario taxpayers. Premier, how could you appoint your biggest fundraiser to a position where he can lend \$150 million to your largest donor?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: I indicated the credentials Mr Weiss has. Let's talk about some facts here. First of all, the fact that the plan invests in real estate is not new. In fact, in 2002 it invested more than \$1 billion—that's "billion" with a "b"—in real estate. Secondly, the public service pension plan is the only major public sector plan that reported a gain in 2002. Clearly, this is an indication of the expertise there since we're the only major plan that had a gain. It has \$11.5 billion in assets in more than 500 different companies in more than 10 different countries. Clearly, results speak for themselves. When all the rest of the world's concerned about pension investments, this particular pension has the only gain in a major sector. So there you go.

1430

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): New question.

Ms Pupatello: Premier, you're responsible for avoiding these kinds of conflicts. I am directing my questions at you and I would like you to answer this question. This is not a typical investment deal. We've taken a very close look at these properties in question. These lands are located in the northwest Brampton planning area. It's raw farmland. There's no sewer connection. Brampton's planning report says that there's no anticipated growth within this planning area until the year 2026—that's 23 years from now. The property won't be developed for 23 years. According to the planning report, there's no guarantee that it will ever be developed. Your biggest fundraiser gave your biggest donor a \$150-million deal to develop land that won't be developed, maybe, for another 23 years. Premier, I ask you, responsible for this appointment and this conflict, why is your biggest fundraiser in a position to lend \$150 million in a deal to your largest political donor?

Hon Mr Eves: I'm sure the Minister of Finance can respond to the question.

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Finance): The honourable member well knows there are rules around pension plans in terms of the investments that can be made and the decisions that can be made by a board. If there is any question about this particular pension plan, we will certainly look into that.

Ms Pupatello: My question is for the Premier, and I'd like the Premier to answer this question. There is more going on here. Around the time that Don Weiss became the chair of the board, the Ontario pension plan changed their policy with regard to real estate purchases. The Ontario Pension Board 2001 annual report states, "OPB invests in income-producing real estate to provide stable long-term returns. Recently, we have identified opportunities to invest in alternative investments, such as private placements...." Before the time that Don Weiss arrived, this kind of investment wouldn't even be on the radar. Suddenly, the Ontario Pension Board is lending money to developers to engage in high-risk, 25-year speculation. Premier, why did this policy change, and what link is there to the arrival of your largest fundraiser to the Ontario Pension Board?

Hon Mrs Ecker: As the honourable member well knows, many pension plans invest in real estate and other issues in order to make sure that they are providing their pension members with a wide array of protection. This board is no different. If there is anything that is untoward here, the government will certainly be prepared to investigate it to make sure that the assets and investments of pensioners and the workers who are protected by this plan are indeed safe, to make sure that they have the pension plans that they have been promised.

Ms Pupatello: My final question on this is to the Premier. Liberals warned you at committee about this kind of appointment and said there could be a conflict. You were warned about putting Don Weiss in such a position. The facts are irrefutable. They are public documents found in the land registry office. They're from planning reports. They're from annual reports tabled in this Legislature.

Your government appointed Ernie Eves's biggest fundraiser to become the chair. The policy changed to allow riskier real estate developments once Don Weiss got there. Ernie Eves's biggest fundraiser then gave Ernie Eves's biggest donor a \$150-million deal to buy land. The land won't be developed for another 25 years, if that. The facts are clear. Your biggest fundraiser gave your biggest donor a deal valued at \$150 million. Premier, surely you have something to say about this kind of conflict going on in this province.

Hon Mrs Ecker: Again, as the honourable member well knows, pension plans must ensure that they're protecting the pensions of their workers. There are requirements—

Interjections.

Hon Mrs Ecker: They're not interested in listening.

The Speaker: We'll wait until they're quiet for the minister. Order.

Minister of Finance?

Hon Mrs Ecker: Once again, they are sitting there taking someone who has a 30-year career in the financial services sector, of whom their own critic said they had no question about his professional services.

There are rules around investments and pension plans. There are protections in place to make sure that—

Interjection.

Hon Mrs Ecker: Mr Speaker, the honourable member is yelling so hard we can't even hear ourselves speak over here. Goodness gracious.

There are rules protecting the pensions of the workers and the pensioners in this plan. As my honourable colleague the Chair of Management Board said, this plan has actually been more successful than other plans that are facing significant challenges.

If there is anything untoward that has occurred here, the government will be quite prepared to investigate facts, not the kind of speculation the party opposite indulges in.

SARS

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. Today your health minister said nurses should "hunker down and get the job done."

Nurses, specifically the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario, have been asking your government to conduct a public inquiry into the re-emergence of SARS. They have stated very clearly that they raised warnings with hospital administrators and other officials early on that SARS was re-emerging in our hospitals, yet their concerns were ignored. They insist that there needs to be an inquiry so all the information can come out.

Premier, 31 people have now died. Thousands are under quarantine. Instead of telling the nurses to hunker down, don't you think it's time to listen to their advice and conduct a public inquiry so that all the facts about SARS can emerge into the public?

Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I said earlier today, and I'll repeat in the House this afternoon, that we are committed to an open and public process. We think the Ontario public has a right to know what goes on in their health care system.

As a matter of fact, less than an hour ago I came from a meeting with the RNAO's Doris Grinspun, the ONA's Barb Wahl, the OHA's Hilary Short, the College of Nurses's Anne Coghlan, the College of Physicians and Surgeons's Dr Gerace and the Ontario Medical Association's Dr Boadway. We agreed on some basic principles: the public does have a right to know through some sort of process; whatever we do in terms of a process should not interfere with front-line services being provided to combat SARS right now; we should not be pitting one sector of health care workers against another as we go forward; and bearing in mind that there should be no duplication of the review of the system which is currently ongoing and being led by Dr Walker. I think that all in attendance basically agreed with those four principles.

Mr Hampton: Premier, there's a basic issue that nurses want to establish: nurses went to senior officials in the hospital system on May 20 and said they believed SARS was re-emerging in our hospitals.

You're talking about a review. But a review will not provide nurses with whistle-blower protection. This is

one of the concerns; nurses want to be able to tell the public what they suspected and when they suspected it.

A public inquiry such as Walkerton provides you with whistle-blower protection. You can come forward and tell the public exactly what you suspected and why without threat of losing your job.

This isn't about pitting one health care worker against another. This is about providing a process, a mechanism, whereby all the facts can be put on the public record. You're talking about a review, which doesn't accomplish that. We want a public inquiry, which provides whistle-blower protection for nurses so they can come and tell the public what they knew and when they knew it. Why won't you support that?

Hon Mr Eves: We are talking about two things: we're talking about the ongoing review, being led by Dr Walker, of the health care system in the province of Ontario and how we can adapt it in the future so it can respond to situations like SARS; and we're talking about a public process that would be open, where the public, including nurses of course, can come and talk about what's going on in the health care system and how we can make it better.

With respect to the second, virtually everybody in the room—with the possible exception of Doris Grinspun—including Barb Wahl of the Ontario Nurses' Association, said that they do not think a public inquiry is the best route, but do agree that a public process or mechanism of some kind is needed, as do I.

1440

Mr Hampton: Premier, the question is this: will nurses have whistle-blower protection or not? Will they be able to come forward and tell the people of Ontario the full facts, as they understood them, without threat of losing their jobs or without other disciplinary action? Nurses have said publicly that in at least two hospitals they came forward on May 20 and said, "We suspect the re-emergence of SARS." A quarantine was not issued until three days later, after many more people had contracted SARS, after many more people were very sick. So it's a critical issue, Premier. Do you support a public inquiry process whereby nurses have whistle-blower protection? Do you or don't you? Yes or no?

Hon Mr Eves: We are in favour of a public process, as is Barb Wahl, the head of the Ontario Nurses' Association, as is the Ontario College of Nurses, whereby nurses and other members of the public will be free to come forward and talk about whatever issues they have.

With respect to North York General Hospital, I'm sure the leader of the third party is aware that the CDC has been on-site since Saturday, and they are totally reviewing all the facts of that particular hospital.

PENSION PLAN

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): A further question to the Premier: Premier, you will know that the trusteesd pension system, the co-operative pension plan in Ontario, is in serious trouble. You'll know that a

number of retirees have had their pension cheques more than cut in half. You will know that it is very clear that the Financial Services Commission of Ontario was part of the process of this pension failure because they failed to properly regulate what was happening.

There's a report in the Ontario Farmer that says your government might be prepared to put new money into the insolvent pension plan affecting the more than 2,300 co-operative employees and pensioners. These are people who paid their taxes, worked hard, made their contribution, but they are now suffering. Premier, on behalf of the 2,300 retirees, can you tell me if this report is true? Are you prepared to support that pension system so that the retirees can collect their pension? Yes or no?

Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I am sure the Minister of Finance, with the responsibility for pensions, can respond.

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Finance): As the honourable member well knows, staff have been meeting with the pensioners, and the regulator has been reviewing the windup report from the board of trustees. As the honourable member well knows, there were decisions made by the board of trustees; those are potentially the subject of a legal process. In the meantime, we are working with the co-op pension to try and find what solutions we can to help the pensioners that are involved here.

Mr Hampton: These people are out millions of dollars. Your government, the Financial Services Commission, watched while this pension plan deteriorated; it watched while the investment manager made incredibly risky investments with the pension system that should never have been invested in such a risky way. So the question is, are you going to support this pension plan financially or not? While you're at it, are you going to look at the other pension plans in this province that are equally in risky positions, and are you going to implement a reform of pension legislation and pension regulations so that what happened to the co-op plan doesn't happen to other pension plans in this province as well? Are you going to do any of those things?

Hon Mrs Ecker: First of all, the regulator was aware of this situation. As you well know, there are requirements for pension plans to report. When there are concerns that have been identified, the regulator moves in to try and resolve those concerns, as they have in this particular case. Our goal is to see what we can do to help the pensioners that are involved in this.

Again, as the honourable member knows, the decisions around a pension plan—the investments that are made, the process that is followed—are up to the board of trustees in this case. This is not a plan that has the benefits guaranteed, as the honourable member well knows. Today, he is sitting here expressing concerns about the status of pension plans in general. Well, maybe that concern should have guided his government before they made decisions in the early 1990s to relax the rules around payments into pension funds. So here we are in a situation where pension plans are having challenges be-

cause of the investment climate in meeting the commitments that they've made, and some of those challenges are attributable to the—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I'm afraid the minister's time is up. New question?

SARS

Ms Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): My question is for the Premier. After the tragic events of Walkerton, a public inquiry was held in order to find out what went wrong and to ensure that the tragedy would never happen again. As an outcome, Justice O'Connor's Walkerton report is a road map for quality drinking water in Ontario. With the latest SARS outbreak, Ontarians and health care workers want to know what lessons would be learned to protect our health. The only way we can ensure that the tough questions are going to be asked, including questions around government policy that may or may not have contributed to the spread or the late closure of SARS—those questions simply won't be asked without a public inquiry.

For the last several weeks we've been asking you, Premier, for a public inquiry. Will you today stand in this House and tell us that you will call a public inquiry into SARS?

Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I'm sure the honourable member was paying attention when I responded to the leader of the third party a few moments ago as to what we are prepared to commit to and what everybody in the room, including the Ontario Nurses' Association and the Ontario College of Nurses, agreed to this afternoon. Surely the honourable member is not going to play politics in the gutter with the lives of people in the province of Ontario.

Ms Pupatello: The questions that we have been asking have been tough questions, and it is hard for you to address these very difficult issues. We're talking about the public health of Ontarians here. We want to know: did the government call off the dogs too soon on SARS? Those are tough questions—questions you shouldn't be afraid to ask. I believe, and my party believes, that a public inquiry is the only way to get people to come to the table and speak and tell people the truth. I believe that it's the way we can get to the bottom of this. We can get to the bottom of how to prevent it in the future, how we can learn from this experience for the future.

Premier, it is perfectly reasonable for you to call a public inquiry. Do it in the name of the people who did die. Do it in the name of the health care workers who are on the front line. We don't believe it's unreasonable. We've done it in this House before. We have come with unanimity to the agreement that the Walkerton report helped us for the future regarding water. We are asking you reasonably. We are asking for a public inquiry into SARS.

Hon Mr Eves: We have committed, if she was listening to the response to the question asked by the

leader of the third party, to a review, which is going on in the health care system right now led by Dr Walker, and we have committed to an open and public look at what has happened and what could be done better as we go forward.

The representatives that I talked about earlier all agree that this is the correct approach. I don't know what more the honourable member wants. In fact, she would do well to listen to her own leader, who on Thursday in a CFRB interview said, "I don't think there's a lot to be gained in finger-pointing in terms of what happened with the second outbreak." I couldn't have said it better myself.

1450

FEDERAL FIREARMS REGISTRY

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): My question is for the Attorney General. One issue that my constituents often bring to my attention is the federal Liberal long gun registry. For many years now, many complaints—we hear them day after day, week after week—have been levelled at this complicated, costly and ineffective registry. This boondoggle registry is not an effective method of reducing gun-related crimes. Instead, it punishes and turns otherwise law-abiding hunters and farmers into criminals.

Could the Attorney General please inform this House and my constituents about what Ontario is doing to ensure that law-abiding hunters, farmers and other long gun users are freed from unnecessary persecution.

Interjections.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): Members opposite are showing how out of touch they are with rural Ontario, with our hunters, with our gun club members and those kinds of people. This is still a very important issue to that constituent.

They laugh about a useless gun registry. They laugh about a billion dollars being wasted by our federal government when it could be spent on much better matters.

Our government wants to get tough on criminals, we want to get tough on people who use guns illegally, but this gun registry has done nothing for law enforcement or to take guns away from criminals. In fact, Toronto Police Chief Julian Fantino has stated on the issue of street crime, "A law registering firearms has neither deterred these crimes nor helped us solve any of them."

Mr Dunlop: It is disappointing to see how much the Liberal opposition despises rural Ontario citizens.

Whenever one of my constituents raises this issue to me, the gun registry's cost is always a factor. Even Jean Charest's own Auditor General, Sheila Fraser, has savaged Ottawa's cost, reckless spending and poor accounting practices. Allan Rock, the father of bill C-68, originally told Canadians that the long gun registry would cost only \$2 million, if you can believe that. Today, spending on this boondoggle has gone up to well over \$1 billion and counting. It has been an unmitigated failure, and it represents a shining example of what is

wrong with the Liberals' policy and the Liberals' lack of accountability to the taxpayers of our country. Instead of wasting the money of hard-working Canadians on the black hole of bill C-68, could the Attorney General please inform us what the federal Liberals should be doing to fight crime?

Interjections.

Hon Mr Sterling: They continue to laugh about a billion dollars wasted by our federal government on this issue of gun registry. Let's be clear about where the Liberals stand. In October 1998, Mr McGuinty said to us, the Harris government at that time, "Be it resolved that the Harris government fully implement the federal gun registry law in the province of Ontario." That's what the Liberals said. That was before the boondoggle. That was before we told the federal Liberals that this was going to be a boondoggle.

We believe that the federal gun registry is a waste of money, a waste of time, and an affront to law-abiding citizens who want to hunt and enjoy nature in this beautiful province of ours. This government will not stand behind the registry.

Interjections.

EDUCATION LABOUR DISPUTE

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): My question is for the Premier. Would that you could work up some of this enthusiasm on behalf of the 69,000 children in Toronto Catholic schools.

Last week, Mr Premier, you said you were postponing an election in deference to the fact that 69,000 kids were out. Well, today is the 12th day of failure for you—the 12th day when you have not succeeded at restoring school to these 69,000 children, by your choice.

You know, Premier, that the bill we introduced would have put those kids back to work a week ago, and there isn't a single benefit to those children that arises from hanging on till your bill can pass tomorrow.

Premier, I would like you to stand in this House today and explain to those children, to their parents, many of whom went to school today anticipating it should have been there for them, why it is you have extended this lockout and why it is you're against a peaceful solution to get those kids back to their schools with some stability and goodwill in their classroom.

Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): The honourable member and everybody on that side of the House could have supported our bill 12 days ago and voted unanimously for second and third reading on the same day.

What is it about our bill you don't agree the teachers should be providing in the classroom?

Mr Kennedy: The Premier stands in his place unable to say one thing in his bill, not a single thing. Some of his members opposite have been pretending that somehow it would end work-to-rule. Our bill would restore relations in schools and work-to-rule. Why won't you pass our bill?

A week ago you could have passed our bill and put kids back to school. Instead, Premier, you appeared in an expensive pre-election ad campaign about banning strikes and lockouts. Instead, you brought in the first bill in this House to seek unanimous consent with a poison pill in it.

Premier, again, stand in this House and explain to the 69,000 children how it is that you've held them up, taken school away from them for an entire week, and you haven't got one single benefit for those children when your bill passes tomorrow after 13 days that you took their school away from them.

Hon Mr Eves: The honourable member knows full well that the teachers in the board he's talking about were locked out. He knows full well that two weeks ago he could have had the courage to stand up in this House and vote for our bill—but you didn't have the guts to do it, did you, Gerard?

Talk about playing politics with the issue: it took them a week to draft a new bill. What is it about this bill that we have that you disagree with? Do you agree that teachers should fill out report cards? Do you agree that they should administer tests? Do you agree that they should be meeting with parents and teachers? Do you agree that they should be participating in co-op education? Do you agree that they should be attending graduation ceremonies? If you do, vote for our bill; vote for it today. We can do it by unanimous consent.

ARTS AND CULTURAL FUNDING

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): My question is for the Minister of Culture. Last year I recall your announcement with Premier Eves that demonstrates this government's unparalleled commitment to cultural institutions in this great city of Toronto. In total, I recall that you committed \$233 million for a number of institutions around the city.

Minister, I understand that last Wednesday you and Premier Eves took part in the official groundbreaking ceremony at the Royal Ontario Museum, which I believe arguably is the most prestigious museum in the country, and that this museum received more than \$30 million from the commitment that you made last year.

I know that ROM has undertaken a very elaborate capital project, funded in part by the Ontario government, and I understand that this is one of the many cultural corridor projects that Premier Eves announced in the spring of 2002.

Minister, can you tell this House why this project is so important to cultural development in Ontario?

1500

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Culture): I would like to thank the member for Scarborough Centre for the question. I also want to compliment Her Honour Hilary Weston on her abilities with a backhoe, which was quite interesting.

At the groundbreaking, the CEO of the ROM, William Thorsell, spoke about the ROM being the promise of

possibilities. I had to think to myself what that actually meant. When I think about it, the Royal Ontario Museum is probably our most inclusive institution of diversity in this country, because no matter who you are or what your background is, the ROM certainly has the ability to indicate something about your background. So what does this mean? I believe this celebration of diversity will certainly lead us to more understanding of all our various and diverse cultures here in Ontario. This, in turn, results in a great degree of harmony within this province. This is important for many reasons, but the major reason is that the Royal Ontario Museum is a vehicle of diversity, but also sets a tremendous aim and future for our youth.

Ms Mushinski: Thank you for that response, Minister. It sounds like we have a real treat in the new crystal design, which is something we can look forward to. I'm sure the new wing will indeed be a stunning addition to the city, and I'm very excited about seeing its completion. In fact, I plan to watch its progress as I walk past the building, which I often do, and on-line by way of a Web cam showing its up-to-date progress.

I know that government money alone is not enough to fund a large-scale capital project like this, and that it depends on the generosity of people like Mr Lee-Chin, who recently made an incredibly generous \$30-million donation to the museum. I also suspect there are a number of other individuals and corporations who have taken advantage of the numerous giving opportunities associated with this project. What can you tell this House about some of the other donors, and how can people make a contribution to this wonderful project?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: I'd like to add my thanks to Mr Michael Lee-Chin for his contribution of \$30 million to this very important project for the city of Toronto's cultural institutions. I'd also like to applaud the Premier and his leadership in ensuring that the province also contributed \$30 million to this project.

It's not simply a matter of the province and the big contributors—and there are a lot of them. All three chairs of the museum—Jack Cockwell, Jim Temerty and Liza Samuel—each gave \$5 million. But it's also about the small gifts they've been receiving as well. I had an opportunity to speak to one of the volunteers who was recalling to me that when he was 10 years old, his mother took him to the Royal Ontario Museum—this was about 40 or 50 years ago, he said to me—and since that point in time, he's been a volunteer and has been giving to the museum. Here's an example of how any member of the public can give to the Royal Ontario Museum, which is a tremendous institution for all of us in this province, if not the country.

PICKERING NUCLEAR GENERATING STATION

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier.

Interjection: Gone.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): If we could stop the clock.

Mr Hampton: If not, I'll ask the Minister of Energy.

The Speaker: Continue.

Mr Hampton: Minister, last Friday at 5:30 in the evening, after most of the press gallery had gone home, you issued an announcement that you're going to hold a review of the financial and energy disaster at the Pickering nuclear station. People across Ontario wanted to see an independent, neutral and respected party conduct that inquiry. They were hoping for the Provincial Auditor, who has already conducted a review of the Bruce nuclear station. Did they get the Provincial Auditor? No. What they got were three people who are already associated with failures in the nuclear industry. This doesn't look like a review or an inquiry; this looks like a whitewash. Why wouldn't you appoint a respected, neutral third party who already has some experience in this? Why did you appoint three people who are tied to previous nuclear failures?

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs): I think it is regrettable that your leader, Ms Churley, chooses to really slap down the credibility of three outstanding individuals.

I think anyone who has known Jake Epp, the former federal Minister of Energy, knows him to be someone of high honour and credibility.

Another member of the team served as secretary to cabinet in both the NDP and Liberal governments. Peter Barnes is a very well recognized and respected former public servant in Ontario.

We also felt it was important to have someone with some nuclear experience. I think Dr Robin Jeffrey, who has a PhD in this field, will bring a lot of experience from his role as chairman of Bruce Power, which has been an unqualified success. If you read the Toronto Star, it highlighted that success.

I find it regrettable that the member opposite makes this an issue of personality rather than the issue at hand.

Mr Hampton: Minister, Robin Jeffrey, one of the people you have appointed, presided over the debacle known as British Energy in Great Britain. In fact, on Friday, November 22, 2002, the Edinburgh Evening News said, "Troubled British Energy Ditches Top Man in Shakeup." Who did they ditch? Robin Jeffrey. This is a company that had to borrow \$4 billion from the British government in order to stay afloat. You're going to appoint him to conduct an inquiry of Pickering.

Then there's Jake Epp. What is Jake Epp's history? Well, while he was Minister of Energy, he persuaded the then Liberal government in Ontario to pour several million dollars into nuclear projects—someone also tied to the nuclear industry.

Minister, this is a project that is \$1.5 billion over budget. It's three years late. All kinds of people argue that there are serious management problems, if not a financial scandal going on. Why wouldn't you appoint a neutral, independent, respected, experienced third party like the Provincial Auditor? Why did you go out and find two people who are tied to the nuclear industry, who presided over—

The Speaker: I'm afraid the member's time is up.

Hon Mr Baird: It seems the leader of the third party says that someone with experience in nuclear technology or nuclear physics shouldn't be involved in a review of a nuclear power plant. I find that of great interest.

I think we're very pleased with the Honourable Jake Epp, a well respected, well regarded person of outstanding character and judgment, who worked very well with all three political parties during his tenure as Minister of Energy; as did Peter Barnes, someone who served all three parties in government very capably, someone of outstanding moral character, a distinguished public servant in Ontario as well and recognized as such.

We felt it was important, as part of the review, to have someone with nuclear experience, and I think Dr Jeffrey certainly brought a wealth of experience as chairman of Bruce Power in Ontario.

TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Minister, I and many others long suspected that your Smart Growth exercise has been about political cover and not about vision.

When you released your central Ontario strategy, you claimed that you were fully committed to implementing its recommendations. Weren't municipalities and panel members alike shocked to see your government's Bill 25? Your own Smart Growth panel members, Mayor Rob MacIsaac of Burlington and Debbe Crandall, are both on record opposing this bill. Why? Because Bill 25 drastically changes long-standing rights of municipalities to plan and manage community growth, including the right of appeal to the OMB. It also eliminates environmental assessment in establishing major new highways. Maybe you can explain to me how you reconcile Bill 25 to your Smart Growth plan. The provisions of this bill repudiate your own so-called growth strategy and your commitment to consultation. Does this mean, as I believe, that Smart Growth is a sham, or were you simply asleep at the switch when this bill came to cabinet?

Hon David Young (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I thank the member for his thoughtful and respectful question, but I think it's more appropriately directed to the Minister of Transportation.

Hon Frank Klees (Minister of Transportation): I'm pleased to respond to the individual. I would strongly suggest, first of all, that the member take the time to read the legislation. The legislation makes it very clear that in no way is the environmental assessment process interfered with through Bill 25. What it does is give a long-term perspective to planning, which there hasn't been in this province for many years. That's what it does. What it does do is allow us to identify, for the first time in many years, where potential corridors should go with regard to traffic in this province.

1510

Any decisions that are made will, in fact, be subject to the environmental assessment process. Please tell your

people that. Let's inform the people out there that what this is about is smart growth, consistent with Smart Growth—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I'm afraid the minister's time is up.

Mr Caplan: I have read the minister's bill. Clearly, he hasn't. Subsection 2(5) of Bill 25 permits the Ministry of Transportation to designate the location of highway corridors in complete isolation from other planning and environmental considerations. Read your own bill. All rights of municipalities and the public to participate in these decisions under the Environmental Assessment Act are eliminated. Instead, under your bill it will be a Ministry of Transportation bureaucrat who will make these decisions for all of us. This is completely outside your Smart Growth principles.

Debbe Crandall said that Bill 25 makes a farce of Smart Growth. Mayor Rob MacIsaac is challenging the bill with your environmental commissioner, alleging that the posting of this bill by the Ministry of Transportation on your Environmental Bill of Rights registry is "highly misleading."

Admit that this part of the bill is a big mistake. Agree to do the right thing and withdraw Bill 25.

Hon Mr Klees: Either the member doesn't understand or doesn't want to understand, and insists on perpetuating facts that are simply untrue. The fact of the matter is that this bill subjects itself fully to the environmental assessment process. Any recommendations, I might say to you, that would in fact be recommended, either by the Ministry of Transportation or the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, would take their lead from the Smart Growth planning process. It is not up to the Minister of Transportation to simply make a designation.

What we are saying, and what the bill clearly states, is that any recommendations that are made would be subject to the environmental assessment process and, I might say, the expropriation procedures in place in the province today.

Read the bill. We'll help you understand it. I will offer to provide the member, and any other members, an opportunity for a complete briefing on—

The Speaker: I'm afraid the minister's time is up.

WORKPLACE SAFETY FOR STUDENTS

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): My question is for the Minister of Labour. Minister, the school year is ending. What are you doing to protect young workers on the job this summer and throughout the year?

Hon Brad Clark (Minister of Labour): I thank the honourable member for the question.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Do you have the answer right there?

Hon Mr Clark: Are you going to listen? It would be a first time.

As Minister of Labour, young worker health and safety is a priority for the ministry and for me personally.

That's why we publicly challenge students, employers and parents to make this summer an injury- and illness-free one. We're calling it the "Safe Summer Challenge for Young Workers."

Specifically, I say to the employers: make sure your workplace is as safe as it can be. You have that responsibility to provide appropriate training and supervision for young workers.

To the parents: talk to your sons and daughters about safety on the job. Make sure they're getting the training that they require for the tasks that they have.

To the young workers: check out our new Web site that is dedicated to Ontario's young workers—www.worksmartontario.com. Remember the lessons that you learned in the Live Safe! Work Smart! program that we introduced in the secondary school curriculum. Say no to unsafe work. It's your right. Do not do anything that you believe can put you in danger.

Mr Miller: Some people have recently suggested that there is no component for workplace safety in Ontario's secondary school curriculum. But I know this is not the case because you've just mentioned the Live Safe! Work Smart! program that high school students have been receiving.

Can you tell me about your involvement with this program?

Hon Mr Clark: I want to thank the honourable member for the question. Again, it allows us to address this misconception.

Health and safety lessons are included throughout the high school curriculum. Students from grade 9 to grade 12 learn critical safety messages in science, career studies, technology and five other subject areas. The Ministry of Labour, along with the Ministry of Education, created the Live Safe! Work Smart! program to provide health and safety resources to all Ontario teachers to help make sure our students are safe on the job. The program is supported by Ford of Canada and the Canadian Auto Workers union. The goal of the program is to encourage a feeling of empowerment among young workers to inspire them to understand and exercise their rights and responsibilities for workplace safety. Working together, we can achieve that goal to ensure that all our young people come home safe after this summer.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain): My question is for the Minister of Education. Your funding formula is geared toward larger schools and larger classrooms. All the research shows that this is not better for children. Your appointed supervisor claims that by closing schools in Hamilton, he will be able to improve the quality of education in the classroom. This isn't true. School closures are happening too quickly and are premature. Hamilton parents are concerned that the remaining schools will not be able to accommodate the influx of students.

Your supervisor also believes that our schools are somehow disconnected from our communities. A good

example is Woodward school in the north end. Minister, at the very least, I ask you to visit this school and I know you will personally reverse the decision. They are at 105% capacity. Children from working class parents—hard-working people—go there. A large percentage of the children are English-as-a-second-language. Wonderful community programs are fed through that school. It is the community; it is the hub of the community.

Minister, do you agree with your supervisor when he says that the quality of life in our community is not his concern?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Deputy Premier, Minister of Education): I think it's very important to keep in mind that school accommodation reviews have always been the norm in this province. They occurred under Premier Peterson and under Premier Rae; they continue to this day. It has always been incumbent upon school trustees to do an accommodation review to determine where new schools will be required, renovations required, additions required and, in other cases, where school closures are going to take place.

When they do so, they do so in consultation with the local community so that there can be ample input from the local community. I might let the member know that school renewal and maintenance spending is up by \$1.14 million this year. Obviously, the accommodation review that is taking place is taking place in a way that school accommodation reviews have always occurred: in consultation with the community. Having said that, I can tell you that school closures are always difficult.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Supplementary?

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): My question is to the same minister. Minister, your supervisor under your direction has basically ordered a closure of 1,900 spaces in Hamilton. What you've done is you've ordered the closure of numerous schools. You don't get the difference between school closures because they're not in the best educational interests of the kids and school closures because you've put a bounty on the heads of those kids.

You have said that for every one of those kids you displace, for every one of those 1,900 spaces, the board will get an additional \$590. That is a bounty you've put on the heads of those kids. What you're saying is that it doesn't matter if it's in the educational best interests of those kids; if you don't close those spaces, then you're not going to get additional money. You're destroying communities, Minister. You're pitting community against community, neighbourhood against neighbourhood. Your formula is flawed. It doesn't work. It hurts kids; it hurts neighbourhoods. You don't seem to get it. I challenge you to come to Woodward Avenue school and tell those parents, where it's at 105% capacity, that it's in their best interest to close.

Hon Mrs Witmer: I understand full well that school closures are always difficult. I don't think there's ever been a school closure that hasn't been difficult. But I would remind the members opposite that we have had school closures under Peterson, 1985-90, 184 schools; under the NDP, 1991-95, 134 schools.

I would just let you know that since 1998 to September 2003—this is with the new funding formula—school boards will have built about 316 new schools, undertaken over 291 additions or major renovations, and 200,000 new pupil spaces have been created since 1998. We've reduced portables—

The Speaker: I'm afraid the minister's time is up.
1520

SPORTS FUNDING

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): My question today is for the Minister of Tourism and Recreation.

Interjections.

Mr Johnson: For anybody that's interested, I can talk into this microphone, and the people watching TV will hear it, but nobody across the way is paying any attention whatsoever.

My question today is for the Minister of Tourism and Recreation, the Honourable Brian Coburn. He represents Ottawa-Orléans. The good news about this is that there's something good going on in the city of Hamilton. I'm surprised I haven't heard any more about it this afternoon, especially from the member for Hamilton Mountain, and that is that I've heard a lot of rumours that Hamilton is vying for the Commonwealth Games in the year 2010.

Minister, my question is, knowing that our government has always been interested in sports—very supportive and so on—could you tell me what our government is doing in support of giving the games bid—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I'm afraid the member's time is up. Minister?

Hon Brian Coburn (Minister of Tourism and Recreation): I tell you, there's not too much that escapes the scrutiny of the hard-working member from Perth-Middlesex.

You're absolutely right. There was good news in Hamilton this week: the bid for the Commonwealth 2010 Games. We have been solidly behind that from the get-go. We provided \$500,000 initially to help prepare the bid package. That culminated in an announcement last Monday in Hamilton, where I was joined by the Honourable Brad Clark and the Honourable Frank Klees to announce \$500 million in support of the Commonwealth Games. I want to also add the great work that Minister Klees, Minister Clark and my parliamentary assistant, Wayne Wettlaufer, have put into this initiative. The funds announced cover infrastructure renewal and new infrastructure operating costs. That also goes toward promoting programs for amateur sport and the enhancement of amateur sport here in Ontario.

Mr Johnson: Thank you, Minister, for that answer. It's obvious that Hamilton is the only choice for 2010, and I look forward to seeing athletes, not only from our home but overseas, competing in the great city of Hamilton.

The financial commitment from our government is great news for Ontario athletes. Could you tell me more

about the other support the government is giving for sports in this province?

Hon Mr Coburn: The Eves government is dedicated certainly to promoting leadership, commitment, dedication and teamwork in our province's athletic sector to help create role models for Ontarians and all ages. Last year we committed about \$148 million for sport and recreation in the province of Ontario. That's a huge investment for our young athletes, through innovative programs like SuperBuild, culture and tourism programs, the foundation for athletes, and sport training programs. We've recently embarked on developing an Ontario action plan as well, in concert with the federal government and our provincial counterparts right across the country. That helps create a comprehensive strategy for successful sport development here in Ontario. We've also taken on managing the Ontario Games program. Our government certainly has always understood the importance of community sport, and we continue funding many worthwhile community sport and recreation programs.

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): My question is to the Minister of Education. Minister, once again under your government, people are getting hit in the pocketbook and communities are being undermined.

Your hatchetman, Paul Christie, wants to charge parents for parking when they fill their vehicles with equipment and stay to watch their kids play baseball, soccer or whatever on school grounds.

First you force the boards to charge much higher fees for community groups using our schools, and now you want to charge them for parking. What's next? A cover charge to watch the games? What's worse: meanwhile, how much do MPPs pay for parking at Queen's Park? Zero. Zip.

Minister, this is wrong. We get free parking, yet your henchman is going to start charging parents to stay at their school grounds to watch their kids play. Why don't you call your Conservative buddy and tell him to drop this community-killing fee today?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Deputy Premier, Minister of Education): I can understand that the member is upset. In fact, I would say to the member opposite, I was very surprised to read in the paper today that this decision had been made.

I have since had the opportunity to follow up to find out what's really going on as opposed to speculating on what's going on. I have learned that it's going to be a pilot project in July and August at about 14 or 15 schools. It is intended for people who park there in order to commute and use public transportation. It's like a public parking lot, and people who are using the school facilities will not be paying any parking fee. If it's determined in August that they won't continue, they won't continue. But I knew nothing about it until today

and I wanted some answers, and that's what I have learned.

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I will seek unanimous consent to move a motion respecting tomorrow's sitting time.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I move that notwithstanding standing order 9 and any other order of this House, the House may continue to meet beyond 6 pm tomorrow in order that the Speaker may put the question on government motion number 28, standing in the name of Mr Eves, at 5:50 pm should that be called as the first order of the day, and that immediately following that vote a new sessional day is deemed to have commenced and the order for second reading and, if necessary, third reading of Bill 28 may be called, and following the disposition of Bill 28 the Speaker shall adjourn the House until Wednesday at 1:30 of the clock.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

PETITIONS

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition that reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Health Canada approved Visudyne on June 1, 2000, as therapy for the treatment of the wet form of age-related macular degeneration; and

"Whereas clinical trials have demonstrated that this treatment safely and effectively stabilizes vision loss in 67% of patients and improves visual acuity in 13% of patients; and

"Whereas patients requiring therapy using Visudyne face a cost of \$1,750 for the drug and \$750 for the clinician procedural fees each time therapy is administered, and to complete a full therapy cycle, a patient would be required to pay \$15,000 to preserve his or her sight; and

"Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Health in May 2002 announced Visudyne funding criteria that is not retroactive to June 1, 2000 and effectively excludes 80% to 90% of all eligible patients who suffer from macular degeneration;

"Be it resolved that the Ontario Ministry of Health immediately change its unfair restrictions on macular degeneration patients and reimburse those patients who have used their own financial resources to receive this vital treatment."

I affix my signature. I am in complete agreement.

ADOPTION DISCLOSURE

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas in Ontario, adopted adults are denied a right available to all non-adoptees, that is, the unrestricted right to identifying information concerning their family of origin;

"Whereas Canada has ratified standards of civil and human rights in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the UN Declaration of Human Rights and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child;

"Whereas these rights are denied to persons affected by the secrecy provisions in the adoption sections of the Child and Family Services Act and other acts of the province of Ontario;

"Whereas research in other jurisdictions has demonstrated that disclosure does not cause harm, that access to such information is beneficial to adult adoptees, adoptive parents and birth parents; and that birth parents rarely requested or were promised anonymity;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario to enact revision of the Child and Family Services Act and other acts to:

"Permit adult adoptees unrestricted access to full personal identifying birth information;

"Permit birth parents, grandparents and siblings access to the adopted person's amended birth certificate when the adopted person reaches age 18;

"Permit adoptive parents unrestricted access to identifying birth information of their minor children;

"Allow adopted persons and birth relatives to file a contact veto restricting contact by the searching party; and

"Replace mandatory reunion counselling with optional counselling."

Of course, I will affix my signature to this petition.

1530

ITER FUSION PROJECT

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It is my pleasure to present a petition on behalf of my residents and constituents in the riding of Durham.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the proposed ITER fusion research facility would result in 68,000 person-years of employment and an estimated \$9.4 billion in foreign investment;

"Whereas ITER would bring international scientists and researchers to Canada and place our nation in the forefront of new developments in research and technology;

"Whereas ITER is strongly supported by business, labour, educators, elected officials and citizens throughout Durham region, the host community;

"Whereas the province of Ontario has already recognized the economic importance of ITER to Canada and the world by committing \$300 million to support the Canadian ITER bid;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows: that the Parliament of Ontario take the necessary steps to strengthen the Canadian bid for the ITER research facility, including the commitment of more funds and other resources to support a successful Canadian bid; and that the province of Ontario ask the federal government to show the leadership and commitment necessary for Canada to win the ITER bid."

I present and sign this in support of my constituents and their request.

TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the government of Ontario proposes to pass legislation known as the Smart Transportation Act (Bill 25) and this legislation will, if brought into force, have the following ... detrimental effects on the environment and the citizenry of ... Ontario: removal of important environmental safeguards currently in place during the planning and/or construction of major infrastructure projects such as new highways, removal of the democratic rights of Ontario citizens to participate in hearings and other meaningful consultation during the planning and/or construction of major infrastructure projects, removal of current rights of municipalities to control their land use planning and to have access to remedies when those rights are infringed during the planning and/or construction of major infrastructure projects such as new highways;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly shall use its powers to ensure that the Smart Transportation Act (Bill 25) is not passed and is not brought into force."

I'm pleased to give this to our wonderful page from the great riding of Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot, Kaitlynn-Rae.

HAZARDOUS WASTE

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): I've brought to this Legislature over 5,000 signatures from my constituents who have signed the following:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Clean Harbors, the former Safety-Kleen, is trucking in highly toxic sludge from Sydney, Nova Scotia, to Ontario;

"Whereas the Clean Harbors, formerly Safety-Kleen, hazardous landfill and incinerator is the only facility on the North American continent that has a permit to landfill untreated hazardous waste;

"Whereas Ontario has become the dumping ground and haven for toxic hazardous waste;

"Whereas it is not in the best interest of the people of Ontario to import hazardous waste; and

"Whereas this Clean Harbors site near Brigden will have long-term consequences to the environment, to human health and eventually contaminate the ground-water;

"We, the undersigned, petition the government of Ontario to stop the landfilling and disposing of untreated hazardous waste in Ontario and stop the shipment to Ontario from the Domtar tank in Sydney, Nova Scotia."

I affix my signature to this petition.

TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It's very short. It says:

"Whereas Bill 25 eliminates the Environmental Assessment Act provisions from new highway planning, freezes property rights along new highway corridors, and enables the Minister of Transportation to override local municipal plans and zoning;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly shall use its powers to ensure that municipalities and landowners continue to have the power under the Environmental Assessment Act to participate in—and challenge—economic, planning or social impacts used in planning new highways or transportation corridors, and that the evaluation of air and water quality, toxic runoff and increased congestion impacts continue to be assessed, and that Bill 25, as presented to the Legislature, and as a matter of public urgency, be defeated."

This petition is signed by Barbara Sullivan of Campbellville. I wholeheartedly agree with it, and I too have affixed my signature.

HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ministry of Transportation has designated certain routes for a proposed mid-peninsula highway, and the major proposed route would cut a swath through the Niagara Escarpment, a UN-designated biosphere reserve;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly shall use its powers to ensure that there are no new cuts through the Niagara Escarpment to create a new highway, and that the Niagara Escarpment will be protected, as envisioned in the Niagara Escarpment plan, for current and future generations."

I am pleased to add my signature to this petition.

HYDRO RATES

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Harris-Eves government has mis-managed the electricity policy of the province of Ontario;

"Whereas last fall the McGuinty Liberal call for rebates, although fiercely rejected by the government, gained huge public support. With no options open, the government introduced and passed a plan to rebate \$75 to customers and place a cap on electricity commodity prices at .043 per kilowatt hour;

"Whereas Mike Brown, MPP, has been fighting for rural rate assistance;

"Whereas the Ernie Eves government forces Great Lakes Power customers to pay into a fund for rural rate assistance; and

"Whereas rural rate assistance would reduce the distribution bills for customers by hundreds of dollars each year;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, support the efforts of Mike Brown, MPP, to have the rural rate assistance program extended to the Great Lakes Power service area immediately."

These petitions are signed by hundreds of my constituents, mostly from the Wawa area.

EDUCATION

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the Conservative government has spent over \$385 million to fire teachers and education workers in our public school system;

"Whereas there are 26% fewer teacher-librarians and 22% fewer physical education teachers in our schools today than there were in 1997;

"Whereas the Eves government diverted over \$100 million in federal transfers for early childhood development into tax cuts for corporations and slashed all new grants for child care spaces;

"Whereas there are almost 40,000 students with learning difficulties waiting to be assessed by a professional;

"Whereas a study by the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto says that 'teachers are demoralized, student achievement has stalled, and school and school districts report great difficulty in meeting local needs';

"We, the undersigned, call on the Eves government to return peace to our public school system and return \$1.6 billion in essential services that has been removed from the public education system and used to pay for misguided corporate tax cuts and partisan government advertising campaigns."

I affix my signature. I'm in complete agreement with the sentiments expressed in this petition.

1540

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): I have a petition entitled "Fair Rent Increases Now." I want to

thank Joyce Richardson and all the residents who signed these and submitted them to me.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the number of tenants receiving above-guideline" rent "increases is growing exponentially, and;

"Whereas many of these increases are for increases in utility costs, many of which have gone down since; and

"Whereas tenants should not have to pay for improvements forever, even when the costs have been realized by these rent increases; and

"Whereas the Tenant Protection Act does not give a tenant relief due to the costs being realized or a drop in utility costs; and

"Whereas tenants should not be receiving rent increases where there are work orders issued for the building;

"Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Ontario Legislature to immediately pass MPP David Caplan's Bill 134 entitled the Fair Rent Increases Act at the earliest possible opportunity so that tenants can get relief from above-guideline" rent "increases once the bills have been paid."

I'm in complete agreement with this petition, and I have affixed my signature.

HIGHWAY SAFETY

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I'd like to thank Andrew Baird of Bruce Bay Road in Bruce Mines for assembling these petitions and sending them to us.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Highway 17, known as the Trans-Canada Highway, between Ripple Rock on the west and Mink Point Road on the east in the township of Johnson, is unsafe, particularly in light of the fact that school buses enter and exit on to this stretch of the road to serve a secondary school of 650 students and an elementary school of 150 students; and

"Whereas there have been several accidents, the latest of which resulted in the fatality of a 16-year-old male;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Transportation do immediately make changes to the signage, speed limit, width of lane and/or install caution lights in order to make this section of this highway safer for our students as well as for all travellers on this section of the highway."

I agree with this petition. Many of my constituents, from Thessalon, Desbarats, Echo Bay, even Richards Landing and many places on St Joseph Island, have signed this petition.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): This is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. This is a petition that arrived some time ago, but I feel I should read it into the record.

"Whereas the Eves government has increased the fees paid by seniors and the most vulnerable living in long-term-care facilities by 15% or \$7.02 per diem effective August 1, 2002; and

"Whereas this fee increase will cost seniors and our most vulnerable more than \$200 a month; and

"Whereas this increase is 11.1% above the rent increase guidelines for tenants in the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas the increase in the government's own contribution to raise the level of long-term-care services this year is less than \$2 per resident per day; and

"Whereas according to the government's own funded study, Ontario ranks" dead "last amongst comparable jurisdictions in the amount of time provided to a resident for nursing and personal care; and

"Whereas the long-term-care funding partnership has been based on government accepting the responsibility to fund the care and services that residents need; and

"Whereas government needs to increase long-term-care operating funding by \$750 million over the next three years to raise the level of service for Ontario's long-term-care residents to those in Saskatchewan" way back "in 1999; and

"Whereas this province has been built by seniors who should be able to live out their lives with dignity, respect and in comfort in this province;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Demand that Premier Eves reduce his 15% fee increase on seniors and the most vulnerable living in long-term-care facilities and increase provincial government support for nursing and personal care to adequate levels."

I affix my signature. I'm in complete agreement with the sentiments expressed by the folks who signed this petition.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Hon Brad Clark (Minister of Labour): I move that, pursuant to standing order 46 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 28, An Act to resolve a labour dispute between the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association and the Toronto Catholic District School Board and to amend the Education Act and the Provincial Schools Negotiations Act, when Bill 28 is next called as a government order, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment, at such time the bill shall be ordered for third reading, which order may then be immediately called; and

That, when the order for third reading is called, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of

this stage of the bill without further debate or amendment; and

That no deferral of the second and third reading votes pursuant to standing order 28(h) shall be permitted; and

That, in the case of any division relating to any proceedings on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to five minutes.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Mr Clark has moved government notice of motion 29.

Debate?

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough-Rouge River): I know my critic for education will be here soon and he will be speaking and putting some good lights to this bill itself.

I listened very carefully as the member put forward this closure motion. It is becoming quite a habit for this government to put closure, shutting down democracy itself. It's common for this government to do so. I'm going to ask my colleagues to add to all this as I go along.

I want to emphasize to the people outside that we have now ceased to talk about the motion before us, Bill 28. The government has now locked the students out from going to school—as a matter of fact poisoning the environment, and even inviting the students to go back to school without any teachers, who have been locked out. Therefore, eventually, they have locked those students out of school.

In all this time allocation time, we could have had this bill in place for a long time if only the government had put the Liberal bill in place, which is a very clean bill that would not in any way have played any kind of politics in all of this. It's very regrettable.

What I feel about education is that it is a very strong cultural subject. It's a subject about our people, our expression and our education. This government has now played so much politics in all of this that we find ourselves again in this mess that this government has put us in. Because of the politics this government has played for all this time, since they have taken charge, we now find ourselves debating about time allocation.

I think it was last September when the Toronto Catholic school board was negotiating its contract, and nothing was done then. At long last, here we are in May—as a matter of fact, in June—eight days into the negotiations, and what has this government done? The school board decided, after eight days of talking, to lock those teachers out, eventually locking the students out, they, in turn, losing their time of education. It is regrettable. It is regrettable that the poisoned atmosphere this government has brought to education has now caused these students to almost lose their year.

I have heard many members on the other side talk about putting students first, and that is far from the truth. If this government was serious about putting students first, they would not have locked 69,000 students out of the schools. I know the parents today are pretty upset about that. If you speak to the teachers, they want to be in the classroom. They want to be with their students. They

have known those students over the years and they know their dreams and aspirations. They have worked with them. This board, working along with the government, which supported them very strongly, has now locked those students out.

1550

I am very disturbed about this. In the area I represent, Scarborough-Rouge River, I know that these parents are wondering now if these opportunities are lost to their children. Will they be able to regain that momentum, that relationship they have with their teachers? Will that relationship they have with education, their love for books and all that—many of them will be turned off. I think it's about time this government stopped that game of poisoning the atmosphere of the educational field so that people and children can have a better education. It is pathetic.

But as I always said, when democracy has been manipulated in the way this government has, the hope we have is that when an election is called, the people out there would have the right sense about them—which I know they do, because the people are always right—to elect not to replace this controversial, poisonous atmosphere that this government has put forward, and select a government like Dalton McGuinty's, which has put forward a very constructive way to have a better environment for education. I am confident that when the time comes for an election, when we start to educate our children in our society, we will have a better society and not the angry environment that this government has done.

I am so scared about what I see in the government's plan, The Road Ahead. The road ahead for students, the road ahead for faculty, the road ahead for the education system is full of potholes, bumps and bad turns, and if we continue in this respect, we will have a bad economy and people all fighting each other.

I want in my time here just to emphasize the fact that if we can vote today, ask and call the motion that we put forward—Dalton McGuinty and Gerrard Kennedy have advocated so strongly an environment in which we can have good education—we could be there today. We would have been there eight days ago and the children would be back in school, but this government seemed not to have done that. I just want to make my contribution in that respect and say how upset I am that now we have come back again to close the motion, to a shutdown of democracy, which is a part of this government all the way, to make sure that we are unable to express our views in regard to the way in which they are going.

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton Centre): I want to take a moment to discuss this ongoing labour dispute affecting the Catholic elementary school teachers and students of Toronto. As you know, approximately 69,000 students are out on the street. Instead of being in class and learning, they and their parents are helpless pawns in a struggle between the teachers' union and the school board.

We have introduced legislation that, if passed, would allow the teachers to go back to the classroom, legislation that encourages the teachers' union and the board to get back to the bargaining table.

This act that we've had the allocation motion for represents the decisive action the Ernie Eves government is taking to ensure students are able to complete their studies without the threat of school year disruptions because of strikes, those hideous lockouts or so-called work-to-rule campaigns. We all know that a lost day of instruction is a lost opportunity for success.

Many people are concerned about this current labour dispute, most notably parents. They want to know that their children are getting the best education available. They want to see report cards and test results. They want to be assured that if their children need extra help in a subject, it will be available to them. They want to see their tax dollars pay for education, not for a power struggle between the teachers' union and the school board. But most importantly, they see their children's futures at risk.

This government is not prepared to sit idly by while these children, these students are left out on the street. That is why we have taken action and introduced the bill and, as well, this time allocation motion to put this bill through.

If passed, this bill would put an end to the practice of using students and their parents as bargaining chips in contract negotiations. It protects students and their opportunity to learn and succeed. The Eves government has taken action to bring labour stability to Ontario's schools by implementing these particular phrases.

We've already invested almost \$700 million to provide 6% increases to teachers' salary benchmarks. Clearly, then, the problem is not solved by throwing money at it. The problem needs strong and decisive action. That's what we are doing.

The Eves government believes that strikes, lockouts and work-to-rule campaigns in schools, even for one day, have a detrimental effect on students, their parents and the broader community. McGuinty and his Liberals would rather bow to union pressure than make the decisions necessary to put the children and their families first.

Let's get the students of the Toronto Catholic District School Board back in school while the board and the union work to resolve their differences without affecting the classroom. Let's put the students of Ontario above the disputes between the adults. Let's work together to get these students back in the classroom.

This government takes the education of children very seriously. The members on this side of the House take the education of our children seriously. We know that teachers are dedicated professionals who want to be in their classrooms, teaching. My wife has been a high school teacher for 29 years. I myself have spent 12 years at the front of the classroom, teaching. We do not want to be on strike. We do not want actions that we know are detrimental to the education and safety of our students.

The fact is that classroom disruption is occurring and the time for classroom disruption must and will be over. Our goal is to ensure that students receive the education they deserve, without the threat of school year disruptions

because of strikes, lockouts or so-called work-to-rule campaigns. That's why we have taken action.

We believe we have listened to the requests from parents and teachers alike and we have responded with this proposed legislation that requires teachers to do things like complete report cards and participate in graduation ceremonies and parent meetings. I agree that these elements are part of the responsibility of being a teacher because, let's face it, the teacher is the one responsible for ensuring that the children are able to do the best they can. Furthermore, it should be there that the teachers are also the ones who are responsible for communicating with parents the progress or lack of progress that these children have made in the classroom. That's why a complete report card is a report card. Anything less is not a report card.

Participating in parents' meetings is a critical element of the responsibility of teaching. It's important that full, complete and open communication remains in place with the parents of the students.

It's despicable that school boards have the opportunity to lock teachers out. This legislation would stop the lockouts. It would prevent work-to-rule campaigns from happening within that board and allow the board and the union to work together to resolve their differences, along with the assistance of the Ministry of Labour's arbitrators and negotiators.

This legislation makes sense. School boards should not—I repeat, should not—have the power to lock teachers out, because they then become the culprits in causing a problem with the learning process of that child. This legislation puts those student needs above the others.

1600

Do you know what's quite interesting? The Liberals don't think so. They oppose this. They opposed the introduction of the bill, they opposed the elements of the bill in debate, they opposed it in second reading and, again today, they oppose it on the time allocation motion.

As I stand here before you today, students are being used as pawns. They're being manoeuvred in a high-stakes chess game played by the teachers' union and by the school board. The union and the board are fighting with each other, in order to do what? To win a game. But no matter who emerges as the victor, the student pawns end up being discarded at the side of the board, and that's not fair.

The members opposite support this battle when they could have chosen to end it weeks ago. They believe it's OK to keep 69,000 students on the street, that administering tests and writing comments on report cards are not in fact part of a teacher's job. How can you give half a report to a parent? Does a C+ mean anything without an explanation? Does an A- mean anything without an explanation? Does a mark of 70 mean anything without an explanation? Hardly. It really doesn't mean anything. It means the child gets a mark or gets a letter. But I, as a parent, surely would like to know why my child got 70 when I think that child perhaps could be achieving more;

or surprisingly, finding that my child scores a mark of A-, B+ or an 85 or whatever it is, I'd like to know why that child achieved—I can guess, perhaps, as a parent, but I think I've got a right to know why my child has been able to achieve or not achieve that level. I should have a right to be able to speak with my student's teacher to get an explanation.

The members opposite support this battle when they could have ended it weeks ago. As I said, they think it's OK to keep the students out on the street and that administering tests and comments on a complete report card is in fact not part of the teacher's job. The Liberals and the NDP believe it is just and proper to use children's education as leverage to deny children the opportunity to learn. The Liberals and the NDP believe the demands of the teachers' unions should supersede the rights of Ontario's children and their families. They believe that the demands of the teachers' unions should supersede the rights of the children and their families. We say that's enough. Enough is enough.

We need to legislate an end to this labour dispute, and all others, and make sure we can put teachers and students back in the classroom where they belong, to do what all teachers just want to do: their job. Teachers teach because they want to teach. They want to do their job. They're happy to do their job. They want to work with children, and they should be entitled to work with their teacher.

This proposed legislation contains a fair, balanced approach to getting an agreement between the union and the board. The two sides have not been able to reach an agreement between themselves, so this bill brings in a mediator-arbitrator to settle the items that are in dispute and bring resolution. This bill provides for the two parties to agree on that mediator-arbitrator between themselves—not an imposition from the government, but to agree on a mediator-arbitrator between themselves. Only if they were unable to agree between themselves, as is standard practice in labour law in Ontario, would the minister step in and have to appoint one. This is fair; this is balanced; this is a historical mechanism for settling labour disputes. This gets teachers and students back in the classroom where they belong. This is the right thing to do. The Liberals oppose it; the NDP opposes it. Let's act to do the right thing by putting the needs of these children first. We must pass this act.

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): It is important to join this debate. It is a sad use and abuse of this House that the government members would stand here and talk about urgency and, even more galling, invoke urgency on behalf of 69,000 children whom they could have prevented from being locked out. These people could have done that, because it's their machinations, taking out expensive TV ads the very day this lockout happened. The only turmoil anywhere in the province to be found, and there was Ernie Eves on TV with advertising, trying to take advantage of this particular circumstance. It is an abuse of this House to have the government tell us that now they want to expedite things,

now they want to take care of business. Well, we have watched this government suffer through 13 days—as we head toward tomorrow—of deducting their education away from the children of this particular school board, and all for the most petty political gamesmanship that has possibly been seen in this House. There have been other things perhaps more severe in their impact, but there has been nothing as bald as some of the statements this government has put forward on behalf of this particular initiative.

This initiative from the turmoil team is intended to have one effect. One of the members opposite used the words “sit idly by.” They are nailed to their chairs by the sharp tacks that run their campaign, thinking they can have this dispute go on. This bill in front of us, which purported to help kids, instead was put to this House for one express purpose, that is, to delay and prolong the lockout taking place in the Toronto Catholic board. It is very clear that this government is prepared to enter into a stunt against these children. That's how strongly they apprehend.

We had, for example, one of the members from Scarborough say the other day that this bill was needed to restore certain things in classrooms. In fact, each of these members opposite knows—or if they don't know, then it's even more telling, but they do know—that this bill is not required. In fact, the special provisions they've stuck in their bill, which have held up this lockout, which have supported this lockout—and every member opposite has been careful to support the lockout taking place by this board, an almost unprecedented lockout in the early stages of a dispute. This lockout has been supported by a bill that pretends to do one thing and does something else completely different.

Bills like this have been passed in this Legislature by every stripe of government, and they've done it when it's been apprehended that the children's interests needed to be put first. In this particular case, it was the phony lockout that caused us to want to see an end to this.

Would the government assist and abet in any way in ending the phony lockout? It would not. It brought instead a portion of this bill called part II. Some of the members opposite, including the member for Scarborough Centre, stood up and said, “This is necessary to help the kids get their report cards.” That's not even in the bill. In fact, any back-to-work bill would restore report cards and all of the normal functions. We've had each of the members here stand up and say something to their constituents out there that they know doesn't pass the test of actually being required. Instead, they would actually stall these children from getting back into their classrooms, actually stand in the way of teachers being able to go back to work, not to mention the ill will they're trying to sow among the 3,500 teachers in this particular board, all for a fairly desperate political ambition.

What happens when this government tries this kind of gambit, tries to coordinate its political advertising with the turmoil they've been able to arrange, and then

perpetuates that turmoil, all in favour of trying to incite people around an election, and the election doesn't happen? What happens then? This, I think, is very illustrative, because it shows, quite frankly, the kind of government we're dealing with, a government on its very wobbly last legs. This is not a government that admits its mistakes. This is not a government that, when put into a corner, actually has the courage or integrity to come back to people and say, "We'll fix this. We'll do something about it."

1610

I think there are many people out there wondering—parents in the Catholic system, some of the teachers—and we have here in the gallery a couple of brand new teachers. We haven't heard about some of the new teachers and some of the average teachers in this—people who have worked very hard to get their education. Any reasonable people in this province will concede that teachers don't teach for the kind of things that are at dispute or have been forced to be in dispute in this particular bill—not for the money, not for the privileges. Their starting wages are on the order of \$35,000. An average wage is around \$53,000 for people in whom we've put the trust of children. But these members would play games with those kinds of people who need those salaries. They would support locking them out and then support perpetuating the lockout in the bill we have in front of us.

They would hide in this bill something that they knew was designed to guarantee this bill could not pass. Why? Because they put something in this bill that would harm children in London—and these members would support that—that would harm children in Kitchener, that would harm children all around the province, because it would have the effect of giving this government the power to declare any duty they want to ascribe to teachers as subject to penalty if it isn't carried out by teachers.

This is a crossroad for a government that, I guess, finds itself in desperate circumstances. It's prepared, as it was in the past, to make some kind of strange arrangement to sit here at Queen's Park, push a button and things would get better in the playgrounds and the classrooms and so on. Maybe at one time they believed this, but they know better now. They have tried some of these things in the past.

What happened the last time they were going to force things to get corrected in terms of extracurricular activities was that 430,000 high school students lost extracurricular activities. Not one backbench government member roused himself on behalf of those kids. They waited for eight or nine long months. They sat by and watched their government go through exactly this kind of machination, this kind of power and control struggle.

People are fed up with this government's power and control initiatives around schools. Every time you turn around there's someone from the Progressive Conservative Party creating turmoil in schools. People have had enough. They're fed up with this kind of manipulation. The government can exercise its political desperation someplace else.

If this bill had integrity, it would contain ingredients for a peaceful resolution. Those ingredients are well known and available. If this government had integrity, they would be seeking, finally, at the end of their term, after having cost 24 million lost school days—in fact, sadly, thanks to this particular lockout, supported and perpetuated by this government, we've added almost another million days: 69,000 children times 13 days is 875,000 lost days that each of the members opposite bears responsibility for, because they couldn't buck the trend, they couldn't stand up to their political masters, they couldn't say to the campaign strategists, "Don't do this. Don't engineer a lockout just to support the campaign. Put the kids and their parents in a position of some respect."

It's very clear that there should have been, from a government with integrity, a proposal for real multi-year contracts—three and four years—without this kind of gamesmanship on the part of the government. They go to a well—and thankfully, from what we're hearing out there, they go there too often—to draw the seeds of discontent and spread them around. Well, people are fed up. There are many people out there who don't have kids in school, and they're fed up watching a government only able to make a mess of the situation in our schools. They have, unfortunately for this government, a respect that is fundamental for both public education and the people in whom we put the trust to publicly educate our children.

The people opposite play with that. They would instead put a big stick in this particular bill. They would put a stick in that bill because that's all they know. They think they can manage the government just by punishing and blaming people. For eight years we've seen not just the fact that that's wrong but how hilariously ineffective that is. The government can't make anything work. There isn't a single initiative they can point to that actually has brought about the results they promised.

In education we have kids going backwards; we have kids with special needs scoring lower on test results. The only test scores this government won't talk about are their own EQAO test scores. Literacy tests have gone backwards this year. The government will not speak to that. They will not talk about their own lack of achievement, because they won't do what this bill confirms: they will not take responsibility for kids doing well. If they did, either singularly or as a group, we would have seen the peace plan in this bill: not enforcing, not blaming, not punishing, not pointing fingers, but rather setting up the conditions where we start fighting ignorance in this province rather than having people fighting against one another, where we stop blaming school boards and teachers but rather get people focused on the real challenges we've got.

In grade 9 today, 25% of the kids are headed for dropout and this government accepts that. Some 60% of kids who took applied math failed their standardized tests, and a similar number are struggling to get their credit. Those, in future, are the kids who need to get into technological courses, and they can't be exorcised for

that. Instead, they subject this Legislature to an abuse of process, to give us a bill we could have had weeks ago, in the guise of an expedited closure motion—which this government does like some other people breathe—cutting off debate.

I can understand why they don't want debate. In the final analysis, this exists to perpetuate their anti-, bashing stance against people who are in public education. They've taken their stand. Each member opposite will vote this month again for a private school tax credit that will undermine every single publicly funded school we have in this province. And it's designed that way; it's meant to do that. Seventy-five per cent of the \$500 million has been plucked out of the taxpayers' pockets and given to private, secular schools. That's specifically and explicitly the kind of education they see in the future of this province. It's not well-supported public education; it's not education without turmoil and strife. That's not on the agenda for the Progressive Conservatives of Ontario. Instead, what we have from this government is, very clearly, both a commitment to very little on behalf of public education, a strong commitment to private schools—and if anybody wondered, at the same time they're committing \$500 million, they are subscribing to only 31%, less than a third, of the Rozanski report. In each of their communities, these people sent you to look after their kids, to look after their students, and you come back with this bill that would take away extracurricular activities by trying to legislate what they could have for free. Is that the best this caucus could muster? Fifty-eight people came in and said, "This is all we could do." Well, I tell you clearly that this is not the kind of bill that will involve the advancement of children in this province. Instead, this is a bill that is meant to roll things backward into the kind of turmoil this government has become well known for.

I close my remarks by asking for unanimous consent for our Bill 61, a bill that would send teachers back to work, that would end the lockout this government has perpetuated, that would in fact end the work-to-rule—it would have all the positive conditions for all the children who are affected. I think in a few moments time we'll find out whether this government is really prepared to do something worthwhile on behalf of 69,000 children, their parents and 3,500 teachers whom they've been so glad to exploit politically for the last 13 school days.

I'd like to seek unanimous consent for support of Bill 61, An Act to promote stability and end turmoil in the Toronto catholic board.

The Acting Speaker (Mr David Christopherson): Is it agreed? I'm sorry; I heard a no.

Are you concluding your remarks now?

Mr Kennedy: With that obvious show of the government's position, I conclude my remarks.

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): I wish I could say it was a privilege to be standing here to debate this bill, but I think there are a thousand other things this government could have brought forward had they put forward a clean bill, which this of course is not. In fact,

this is a bill dealing with a lockout. Speaker after speaker on the government side stands up and talks about striking teachers and speaks against the union and about unionists taking action to the streets. This is not the reality of what is happening here in Toronto. The reality is that a majority of the 12 members of the Catholic school board have voted to shut the schools and stop the teachers from teaching. That is what is happening here. What this bill attempts to do is try to ram through in order to further weaken the teachers, further weaken their union. I would suggest it's playing with the children as pawns.

1620

A little bit of history about what is happening here is in order. We only need to go back to May 12. On May 12, the board rejected the union's request for a sweetening of what was being suggested under collective bargaining. In fact, when they rejected that, they also reduced the amount that they had previously offered to the teachers back on April 24. The board stated that the outstanding issues that the parties had discussed were no longer on the table for proposals and then locked out the teachers on May 16.

On May 21, this government introduced the bill, but before introducing the bill a couple of things happened. They changed the immigration—excuse me, I've got that on the brain today—they changed the Education Act by putting in conditions by order in council without debate in this House. They bought time on the airwaves to talk about their proposals for the upcoming election, which were clearly going in exactly the same direction as this bill. What they did not do is go to the Education Relations Commission at all. That's usually what happens before bills are introduced and legislation is introduced to force teachers or any other group back to work. One has to go before a body like the Education Relations Commission to exercise its jurisdiction to determine whether the education of students is in jeopardy. Of course this was not done, because this bill was politically motivated; it was motivated to try to form a wedge between the government and the opposition, to try to get the people out there to think that somehow the opposition was keeping the kids out of school.

Quite frankly, that has not happened at all. As a member for a Toronto riding, one of the 22 ridings, we have had very few people call us, e-mail us or write us on this issue. Those who do are almost universally opposed to this government and what they are attempting to do. Far from this being a wedge issue, people are seeing it for what it really is. This is a government bill that is designed to shore up one of their platform planks for the upcoming election. The parents are extremely cynical about what is happening, and the teachers know for sure, each and every one of them knows for sure, what this government is attempting to do and why they're attempting to do it.

If that did not make matters bad enough, the teachers' union has gone back and requested voluntary arbitration under section 40 of the Labour Relations Act to end the lockout. The board rejected this offer even though 69,000

students would have gone back to school. The board appears to prefer this bill, because this bill is precisely what the board intends to do. They are in tandem with this government. The board and this government are in tandem with the steps that they will take in order to force the teachers back to work and to stop the teachers from taking actions which are democratically allowed in our society.

You ask how all this came about. I would suggest all this came about because this government intended, I think quite maliciously, to use the teachers and the Catholic school board in Toronto to their own political ends. Certainly the students have not asked that their teachers be locked out. Certainly the parents have not asked that the teachers be locked out. Certainly the teachers themselves do not wish to be locked out and have done everything humanly possible to try to get the stalled negotiations up and running again. They have agreed to voluntary arbitration. They have now taken the unprecedented step, which I will talk about later, of going to court in order to end this. It is primarily the board and this government that are responsible for the lockout.

I've heard speakers, particularly on the government side, talk about boards that are dysfunctional. They often use this in the description for the Toronto public board, which has been anything but dysfunctional. It has, though, been a board that has been willing to take on this government when they are wrong. They are willing to stand up for the students, the parents, for the schools, for the system, for seniors' educational opportunities, to keep the schools open and sometimes even to keep the school swimming pools open. They are willing to fight for the people of this city.

However, the Catholic board has been far less forthright. There are 12 trustees and I have had, I guess, the privilege of appearing before them on two occasions.

The first was to ask that they not close three schools that serviced the students of Beaches-East York. The board, in a very strange set of circumstances, had a tie vote that night, six to six, on whether to close the schools down. One of the board members, a certain trustee named Mr Stefanini, decided he could not live with this. He didn't know how to vote. So he absented himself and went home in the adjournment period. Therefore the vote was six to five to close down the schools. You will remember, members opposite, that the parents, the teachers and everyone were extremely upset with the actions of the board that night, and went to court. The court in its wisdom determined that the actions of Mr Stefanini and of the Catholic school board were illegal, and ordered a brand new hearing to determine the fate of all the schools in Toronto that might be closed down.

There was a second full round of hearings at which I appeared. This time Mr Stefanini stayed in his seat. At the end of the night, in what can only be described as the bizzarrest of circumstances, they voted again, this time by a seven-to-five vote, to close down the schools. In doing so, they did not listen to the parents, the students or the teachers, precisely as they do not listen today to any of

those same groups. The issue may have changed slightly—the closure of schools versus the lockout of teachers—but the same process and the same mentality is being used. It is that board that is dysfunctional and it is that board to which the government is giving its allegiance, not to the people who are working hard for our students and for the benefit of our community.

The majority of the members at the Toronto Catholic school board seem only too willing to follow what this government has set out, only too willing to agree with the lockout, wait for closure and wait for the vote tomorrow because the reality is, they do not know what they are doing. This government is using the opportunity to attack our teachers, the workers in the schools and the poor students, just as they have attacked teachers, immigrants, workers and the poor with other policies. This is legislation to force the teachers back to work. It is not just arbitration, but to institute an agenda to have more cuts, an agenda that they want to put forward in the election.

I listened to some of the honourable members opposite when they stood up to speak. They said, "What are you opposed to? There are only five things that we want to put in here." One of them is to administer tests; another is report cards; another is graduation exercises; the fourth one is the transfer of marks and the last one is parent-teacher meetings.

With respect, this is a smokescreen. The teachers already administer the tests. The teachers already write the report cards. The teachers already do the graduation exercises and, in fact, a good deal more public relations with the community than just graduation. I went to a school, albeit not a Catholic school, and the teachers were out in force for the 100th anniversary of that school that I attended just a couple of weeks ago. The teachers already transfer the marks; and the teachers welcome the opportunity at any time to meet with parents in order to discuss how the children are doing.

1630

We come down to, why is this happening? This is happening because this government is intent upon crippling the rights of a very large group of workers in this province, crippling the rights that they have under the Constitution, crippling the rights that they have guaranteed by charters signed in the United Nations and the International Labour Organization that they can belong to a union and bargain collectively.

I know too well what the attitude is here. Prior to being an elected full-time politician, I worked for some 20 years in the immigration department. You've heard me talk about that before, but what you haven't heard me talk about is the one time in all those 20 years that we were forced out on strike. It was during the time of Brian Mulroney—you know, the guy you were all cheering there the other night, the guy you were all down there to cheer. But remember that the people of this country do not cheer for him. Remember, the people of this country look upon him with disdain, and a great many with disgust, for the years that he was Prime Minister.

I will tell you one of the reasons why they do that. I remember only too well as a federal civil servant going

with my union asking for a very modest raise, a 2% raise when inflation was more than that. I remember going out and starting to talk about how important we thought we were to the government and to the people of Canada in the immigration department, in customs and in all the other groups that were affected.

We had the temerity, first of all, to work to rule for a little while and then we had the temerity to go out on strike. We were out on strike only a couple of days when the government of Brian Mulroney decided to legislate us back to work, much as this government is attempting to do it. But I will tell you that he was probably even worse, because what he did in the legislation is, he legislated us back to work with a two-year contract with no increase at all, and at the end of two weeks of striking we were back in our seats at our government offices, having struck for two weeks and having no increase at all—not an opportunity to bargain collectively, not an opportunity to discuss, not an opportunity to increase our take-home pay—nothing at all.

Every civil servant in this country vowed on that day, I am sure, to defeat the Mulroney government, and I am proud to say that every civil servant played their part and that the once mighty party of John A. Macdonald went down to a party of two, and that it has never really ever recovered again.

Mr Frank Mazzilli (London-Fanshawe): Isn't that good for democracy?

Mr Prue: That's democracy.

The same thing may happen here today. When you trample on people's rights and you do it so arbitrarily, when you do it without taking into account their legislative rights, when you do it without taking into account their rights for free collective bargaining and they have those rights, when you try to take away what is necessary for functioning within this society, then you trample on people. If you trample on them, they will fight back.

Indeed they are fighting back. They have filed an action in the courts. The applicant, the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association, has filed with the court. I'm going to read some of what they're asking for, and I think they have an excellent case. I don't know how long this is going to take, but they are filing for bad-faith bargaining against their board. They have involved, in a great many aspects, this government.

They are requesting:

“(1) A declaration that the respondent, the Toronto Catholic District School Board, has violated sections 17 and 70 of the Labour Relations Act.

“(2) A declaration that the respondent's lockout was unlawful in that it was declared for an unlawful purpose, ie, to avoid its duty to bargain in good faith imposed by section 17 of the act.

“(3) An order that the respondent cease and desist from violating the act.

“(4) An order that the respondent:

“(a) return to the bargaining table to bargain in good faith and make every reasonable effort to make a collective agreement.

“(b) rescind its offer with respect to wages, first tabled on May 12, 2003, and all subsequent offers.

“(c) resume bargaining from its offer of April 24, 2003.

“(5) An order that the respondent shall forthwith post and mail a copy of a board notice in the established form to all employees in the bargaining unit.

“(6) Damages bearing interest to the members of the applicant for lost salary and benefits for each and every day of the unlawful lockout.

“(7) Damages bearing interest to the applicant for all losses it suffered as a result of the unlawful lockout, unlawful bargaining and unlawful interference with the applicant's representation rights.

“(8) Such further and other relief as counsel may advise and the board deem appropriate.”

What this means is that the teachers know the inevitability of what this government is going to do tomorrow, and they are seeking redress through the only avenue left open to them: they are seeking redress through the courts. They believe, and I believe, that they have been wronged. They believe that this board, which I think is dysfunctional to the greatest extent of any public education board in this province, is wrong. They also believe that this board is in collusion with this government and that the board is using this opportunity to hide behind Bill 28.

Bill 28 is nothing more than a smokescreen. It's nothing more than the cynical attempt of this government to try to mould public opinion against the teachers, who work so very hard with our students. It's nothing but a cynical attempt to do what Mr Snobelen said so long ago, and which has been borne out so many times, to “create a crisis in education” in this province so that you can change it to some way that suits your purpose. It is a long-standing and, it seems, never-ending attack on the public school system of this province. There are 69,000 students who have been held hostage for something no more than your failed attempt to get at the teachers and their union in this province.

It too will fail. It will fail just as Brian Mulroney in the end failed. It will fail because the people of this province—teachers, parents, students, educators, workers and anyone who is paying any attention at all—recognize that the reason these teachers have been locked out for these 13 days, the reason they are out there with placards, is because this government is pushing them there—a place they do not want to be.

I stand here unequivocally on the side of those teachers. I stand here saying that what they are doing in standing up for their rights is correct. I want those students back to school just like everyone else.

It would have been very easy for this government to have done the right thing and come to a mutual agreement with all parties. Instead, you chose the side of the dysfunctional school board, sending the teachers back with five conditions, as if they did something wrong. You did nothing to the school board. Why didn't your legislation say that the school board has to treat the teachers with respect, as a first item, or that, number two,

they have to bargain in good faith, or, number three, they have to act in ways that are of benefit to the community? None of those things were added. Instead, you took the party that is being wronged—the teachers, through their union—and you are trying to put conditions on them. They are not on strike, they are locked out, and the people who are perpetrating this—your partners—appear, from everything you have said, to have done nothing wrong at all. Well, the people here in Toronto know they have and the people will remember when it comes to the next election.

1640

Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South): Following on from the previous speaker, the member of the NDP, who says he stands unequivocally for the teachers: well, you know what? I stand unequivocally for the students.

What we have said in this bill absolutely is that the teachers and at least the union and the school board have to get back to the table. In the meantime, the students must be allowed to return to their classrooms.

All members are well aware that the Toronto Catholic District School Board has locked out its elementary teachers because they haven't been able to reach an agreement at the bargaining table. This ongoing labour disruption has quite simply ground this part of the education system to a halt. This is a needless disruption. Teachers, parents and their children are suffering from a labour dispute that has been dragging on despite the efforts of this government to legislate a fair and amicable solution.

The impact of this disruption has been felt in many areas. It has forced parents to scramble to find adequate daytime care for their children who should be in school. Some parents who haven't been lucky enough to find adequate supervision have been forced to take time off work, time away from their jobs, so that they can look after their children while the teachers' union and the board do battle over wages.

Of course, it doesn't end there. As bad as the situation is for parents, we cannot forget the effect this needless disruption is having on the children. These children are slowly being robbed of their education. Each passing day that sees them sitting idly at home is a lost opportunity for success. This situation is unacceptable. These children belong in the classroom.

Our government believes that our children are our future. By needlessly denying these children access to the classroom instruction they deserve, we risk jeopardizing their future and ours. Our government has introduced legislation that, if passed, would allow the teachers to return to the classroom, legislation that encourages the teachers' union and the board to get back to the bargaining table. If passed, this legislation would get students back into the classroom, where they belong. It would get teachers back into the classroom, where they want to be. It would allow parents to sleep at night knowing their children are back in school, getting the instruction they need to succeed.

Our children's education is a top priority, not only for this government but for all Ontarians. We have introduced this proposed legislation to protect our children's education, to protect their very future. This ongoing labour dispute needs to be resolved.

I'd like to point out to all members that we are now into the month of June. The last few weeks of the school year are upon us. These are vital weeks. These children have been out of school 11 days as of today, and yet there are almost 69,000 of these students out on the street because their teachers simply are not in school, and their teachers are not in school because the union that represents them and the school board that employs them can't agree. A handful of adults can't agree, so 69,000 students are out on the street. Is that fair? It doesn't seem like it. Each day of instruction lost is a lost opportunity for success. On that, I think we can all agree.

I stand here today to call on all members to support this bill and put the needs of the children above all others. The time for classroom disruption is over. This government's goal is to ensure that students receive the education they deserve, without the threat of school-year disruptions because of strikes, lockouts and so-called work-to-rule campaigns.

To meet this goal, it is clear that a fair and amicable solution must be reached, and it must be reached now. That is what our proposed legislation allows for: a fair and amicable solution. Our legislation was first introduced two full weeks ago, at which time we asked for unanimous consent. We asked all parties in this House to agree to passage of second and third reading upon the introduction of our bill, which of course is first reading. Guess what? The opposition did not support our request for unanimous consent.

Let's get the students of the Toronto Catholic board back in school while the board and the teachers' union work to resolve their differences without impacting classroom instruction. Let's get the students back in the classroom to finish out their school year, a school year that has already been interrupted by this needless dispute. We believe that parents and teachers want their students back in the classroom. We believe in putting students first.

The Ernie Eves government has made education a top priority. That is why we have continued to invest in the education system. This next school year, we'll invest \$15.3 billion, which will increase to \$16.2 billion for the 2005-06 school year.

We have also introduced Ontario students to a new, more rigorous curriculum and province-wide standardized testing, to better prepare them to compete in today's global economy. We have done this because we are committed to maintaining the highest standards in education, and I may add that is a commitment of our teachers as well, but their unions are not permitting them to be in the classrooms where they can teach. Our proposed legislation is simply an extension of this commitment.

The Liberals and the NDP have opposed our legislation. They are opposed to protecting children's educa-

tion. They are opposed to having teachers administer tests and write comments on report cards. They are opposed to putting students first.

I implore all members to stop this needless dispute, join us in making children's education a priority and act to pass this legislation. Let us come together for the children. Let's get those 69,000 children off the streets and back into the classroom where they belong. It makes sense.

It was interesting earlier this afternoon when the questions went to the Premier from the Liberal official opposition members. They are stating that they too have a bill that supposedly would get the children back in the classroom. Well, it was pretty interesting because they waited a week after we had tabled our bill to come up with their bill. It's not exactly the same as ours because, as I understand it, it does allow work-to-rule. It doesn't deal with work-to-rule, which is a form of strike. It's very interesting because they're saying, "You won't give us unanimous consent. We could have had our bill passed." Do you know what? We could have had Bill 28 passed—all three readings—two weeks ago. The teachers and our students have not needed to be out of the classroom for this time.

1650

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): To add to the debate here in front of us again on Bill 28, the original bill the government introduced last week, we on this side have said we will support the original, first part of Bill 28. What was that particular first part that we said, yes, we will give consent to and get 69,000 kids, students, youngsters, back into the classroom? That was strictly to deal with the lockout and nothing else. Unfortunately, when the bill was presented to the House, it contained parts other than ending the lockout. Therefore, if we are here today to continue to debate the ongoing problem, it is because the government has so decided.

I couldn't agree more with the last speaker, the member from Mississauga South, who said, "Let's end this meaningful debate." Well, first of all, the debate is meaningful because it shows the continuous contempt of this government to put pressure on those defenceless people out there. The parents are stressed. The teachers are stressed. The kids are not in school. They are not learning. That's where they should be.

Last week, the Premier himself said, "Do you know what? We are not going to go into an election because we have better things to do. We have more important things to do. We have to deal with the issue at hand, and that is getting those 69,000 kids back to school." As I said before, it was very noble of the Premier to say we have to deal with this issue. Well, for heaven's sake, I think we could have dealt with the issue last week. We would have had the kids back in school. If we had debated the second portion of their motion at length at other times, after we had the kids back in school, then we would have had plenty of time to debate the other issues.

Then the member from Parkdale-High Park introduced a very clean, very simple, very short bill which would

have had the approval of the House. It would have had the same effect that the first part of the government bill would have had, and that was to end this 14-day, two-week lockout and get the kids back to school. What was the bill from Mr Kennedy, the member from Parkdale-High Park? It was Bill 61, which said, "stability and good will," and this is exactly what we deserve to give the parents, the teachers and youngsters: to see them back in school. The bill would have given exactly that. It would have ended the lockout. But because the government doesn't want to go along with it and resolve the issue, we continue to debate the issue today in the House.

At the same time, parents are stressed to the point—because a lot of them just can't handle the inadequacies they face on a daily basis: daycare and jobs. At a time when we are dealing with many stressful things—we have the West Nile virus and the SARS virus, which is a big issue and is taking a lot of our time as well. People are concerned as well—do you think we should be adding stress, as legislators, as government, as Premier, as Minister of Education here in this House? Shouldn't we say, "Look, this is an issue that's imposing a lot of stress on our taxpayers. We should not add to the stress?" Let's get the kids, the students, the youngsters, back into the classroom, and then we can debate the after-school programs or eliminating the right to strike. We can have all the time we want afterwards.

I'm telling the Premier and the members on the government side again today, for the benefit of the youngsters, the parents, the teachers and the board as well—because at this point, parents are saying, "We don't care any more who is right or wrong. We want the issue resolved. We want the youngsters back in the classroom where they belong."

For their sake, I say to the Premier, in the best interests of all of those concerned, let's approve Bill 61 as presented by Mr Kennedy, the member from Parkdale-High Park. Let's put an end to it. Let's get the kids back into the classroom, and then we can haggle over the second part of Bill 28 at length or, even better, let the people decide during an election. If it's coming now, if it's coming later, if it's coming next spring, then at least we can say to the people that we have looked after the most important thing: giving the kids an education in the classroom, where they belong. The rest of the issues they can debate as long as they want, or go to the electorate and say, "This is what we are planning to do. Let us know." I would welcome the call from the Premier to give us that mandate. On that note, I do hope that we can see 69,000 kids back in the classroom as soon as possible.

Hon Tina R. Molinari (Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): It's a pleasure for me to speak this afternoon on this very important bill, Bill 28. This legislation will simply make sure that students in the Toronto Catholic elementary school system get to complete their school year.

It seems that most of the members in this House also support getting teachers back to work. We've heard from

the Liberal Party that they have a bill put forward, that they'd like to get the students back in school. There's a consistency of wanting to reach that goal. But we believe that our bill is the way to get our students back in school.

There seems to be that sticking point in clarifying what teachers' duties are. Any human resource professional will tell you that when you hire an employee it is important to have a detailed job description. The more detailed, the more specific the job description, the better. So I don't see what is so controversial about clarifying some of the duties of teachers. We are asking five things:

(1) That they fully complete report cards, comments and grades included. It's not enough to put the grades; you need to have the comments. Parents need to know how their children are doing.

(2) That they co-operate and assist in the administration of tests under the Education Quality and Accountability Office Act.

(3) That they take part in regular meetings with students and parents. This is something that parents have come to value over the years, having that conversation with the teacher to be able to know how their children are doing.

(4) That they perform duties to assist co-op students in getting placements. I've heard over and over again the number of students who benefit from co-op placements. This is something that is crucial for some students. Not all students are involved in co-op programs, but those who are, value it so much that to have that opportunity taken away is just unfair.

(5) That they perform duties traditionally associated with graduation of students. This is a very important time for students. When they graduate, they want to have their teachers there; they want to have their parents and family there. It's a very important time in a child's career.

By no stretch of the imagination can these items be considered to be outside what most people, including teachers, consider to be part of the work that they perform. These five elements are all vital components of teaching. Testing their students, completing report cards, meeting students' parents, assisting co-op students in getting placements, helping with graduation—these are things that every good teacher wants to do. I get the opportunity to speak to many teachers, and they tell me that these are the types of things that they feel are part of their duties to perform in a classroom, part of their responsibility as teachers to be able to fulfill the students' needs. After all, that's why teachers become teachers: in order to be able to influence the future of this province and of this country. The only people who would object are those who, for their own self-serving reasons, would want to hold our children for ransom as a negotiating tactic. That is not right. It is not right to hold our students for a negotiating tactic.

1700

I'm going to be blunt about this. Work-to-rule campaigns that penalize students are more than just an inconvenience, as some seem to think. When some individuals want to keep parents in the dark about the

progress their children are making, that is wrong. It is wrong to not inform parents how their children are doing, and that happens all too often.

When a school board and a union cannot reach a settlement on a contract negotiation, the students should not be harmed. They are innocent. They have no fault in what is happening between a school board and a teachers' union in coming to a negotiated contract. Yet the students are in the middle. They're the ones who suffer in those types of situations. There are far better and fairer ways. That is exactly what Bill 28 does for the Toronto Catholic board. It establishes a fair process of mediation-arbitration to settle the agreement. It's a fair process. The board and the union have seven days to agree on a mediator-arbitrator. Only if they cannot agree will the Minister of Labour act to appoint one. This is fair.

It is June. We need to have these teachers back in the classroom. We need the 69,000 students back in the classroom learning, where they need to be, where they have a right to be and where they deserve to be.

Let me clear about one more thing. What is going on right now is not about money. The government has provided sufficient money, \$680 million to school boards to allow for 2% and 3% increases to teachers' salary benchmarks for this school year and the following school year. The money is there; the teachers aren't, and I know the teachers want to be.

So I urge all members of this Legislature, please don't impair the future of 69,000 children because a union wants to flex its muscles. Please don't put the future of 69,000 children at risk for partisan reasons. I make a reasonable request. Pass this bill. Children belong in school. Let's get them to go back to school.

The Ernie Eves government believes all young people in Ontario deserve the best education possible, an education that enables them to learn, experience new opportunities and reach their full potential.

Parents are also telling us that they want further stability in Ontario's education system. They want a system that ensures that labour negotiations do not disrupt the quality of their children's education. They want students learning our new curriculum in a stable learning environment, and they want their children to have the opportunities to develop to their full potential. So the Ernie Eves government wants to ensure that the education of children in the Toronto Catholic District School Board is not further disrupted. We want our teachers to be there for our students. Without a doubt, Ontario has some of the hardest-working, most highly skilled teachers in the world. I know a lot of these teachers, within the Toronto Catholic school board and with other boards. Having been a trustee for the York Catholic school board for many years, I had the opportunity to speak to many of the teachers. Most teachers are very dedicated and devoted to their profession. Becoming a teacher is not just a job. Being a teacher is a profession. It's something that they do because they want to. It's not just like any other job. They influence the future minds of this province and this country.

We ask a lot of teachers about our curriculum. A lot of the teachers like the fact that the curriculum enhances student learning. We ask teachers to equip students with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in today's competitive global economy. We ask teachers to inspire in our young people a love of learning to last a lifetime because the need for education never ends. We want our teachers to help our children develop the self-esteem and confidence they need to live fulfilling and productive lives as active, responsible citizens.

I witnessed an example of that this weekend when I heard from a 17-year-old grade 12 student at the Community Hebrew Academy of Toronto's Richmond Hill campus. His name is Yossi Niznik. I attended a ceremony at Chabad Lubovitch in Thornhill which was honouring volunteers who contribute their time in helping students and children with special needs. Yossi talked about the one hour a week that he volunteers with a special-needs student in the neighbourhood. In doing this, he's giving that child's parents a much-needed break.

That is something this student started doing because of the 40 hours of community service work that is part of the curriculum. We feel it is important for students to contribute to the community, become involved in the community. Yossi said that that was the original reason he began to volunteer; he contributed his time because it was required of him through the community service work. But he now says that he enjoys it so much, and not only has he been able to give to the student he works with but he's been able to receive, just by giving. This is what the community service work does for a lot of the students within the province. They now can give back to the community, and in giving they are also receiving.

On provincial, national and international tests Ontario students are proving that they can perform as well as or better than students anywhere in the world in reading, writing, math and science. Our students are also contributing to our communities, and perhaps this is tougher to measure. But all signs indicate that the learning that takes place by having students inject their skills and enthusiasm into the world around them benefits us all; not only those who contribute, but everyone benefits from the contribution of these students.

If the legislation before us passes, teachers at the Toronto Catholic District School Board will be back in the classroom with their students, back in the classroom with our children, where they need to be, where they have a right to be, with the tools and the support they need to ensure that our students achieve success and their full potential in a safe, stable and enriching learning environment.

There has been a lot of discussion here from both sides of the House and people genuinely feel that it's important to have the students back in school. This bill will allow not only to have the students back in school; it will also allow for the teachers to continue to perform the duties that are duly theirs, to be able to fulfill the lives of the students in their classroom and our future.

I feel very strongly that we need to pass this legislation quickly because the students have been out of

school much too long; the teachers have been out of school much too long. Everyone wants to be back in the classroom, and this bill will allow that to happen. I encourage all the members of the Legislature to think clearly before they vote on what the meaning of that vote is going to be. Stand tall and support this bill. Stand tall and support the students of the Toronto Catholic District School Board.

We have heard from a number of parents in that board that they want the students back. They are talking to their trustees and pressuring them to get back to the table. They are talking to the union and pressuring them to get back to the table and discuss, talk and come up with an agreement. It's always best if two sides can come up with a negotiated settlement and an agreement. That always works best. But in cases when that can't happen or doesn't happen, it's the responsibility of a responsible government to do what we need to do to make sure that the students get back into the classroom.

1710

This Legislature has been faced with this before. This is not the first time we've had to face this type of dilemma, and I think in the process, we have fulfilled our goal and our responsibility to ensure that that happens. I feel very confident that once this legislation is passed and the students go back into the classrooms, the teachers will be able to recoup the time they spent outside of the classroom.

This legislation will not only apply to the Toronto Catholic school board but it will apply to all the boards in Ontario. What this says is that when teachers are in the classroom, they need to fulfill their duties, and this legislation clearly stipulates what all those duties are. Getting the teachers back in the classroom, getting the teachers doing their duties in the classroom is what this legislation is all about, and what we need to do.

Interjections.

Hon Mrs Molinari: I'm glad the opposition is actually listening, because they need to know, clearly, what this legislation does.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): The trick this government has used on several occasions and has been a master of is bringing forward bills that have a hostage in them. There are several purposes for this. This is so they can write letters to the editor in your local newspaper saying, "So-and-so supported this bill or was against this bill," and they never talk about the fact that there's a hostage in the bill.

The students in Toronto, in the Catholic school board, which locked out its students—this is not a strike, this is a lockout. It has the same effect: the students are not in school.

This government had an opportunity to pass a bill that was introduced by Gerard Kennedy, the member for Parkdale-High Park, which would have had the effect of going to a system that could be mutually agreed to, where you have mediation and ultimately arbitration, and all other issues would be by the wayside.

What this government wanted to do was put a hostage in the bill, that is, "Let's find something to apply some-

where else in the province.” Is that legitimate for discussion? Yes, it is. I would be suspicious of a bill that the government would be bringing in in that regard, and that bill, by itself, would be contentious, no doubt, but at least it would be subject to full debate and scrutiny and perhaps public hearings, and this Legislature could come to a resolution on the matter. Instead, this government sticks it in this bill. It’s a poison pill, if you will.

If the government really wanted these students back in the classroom and didn’t want to use them as political pawns, they would have voted for the bill that we put forward. The students would be back now. The lockout by the board of education would have ended.

This lockout, by the way, in my view, would never have taken place if there wasn’t a wink and a nod from this government that indeed it wanted to precipitate some kind of, let’s say, contentious issue between teachers and one of the school boards in the province. In effect, it plays into the hands of those who want to fan the anti-teacher, anti-education flames in the province instead of trying to find a logical and reasonable solution, which I think could have been found very quickly in this place had this bill that we proposed been voted upon or if both sides had agreed to arbitration after mediation. This lockout would have ended and we would be in a much better position today than previously. The question is, though, does the government want to continue to play to the anti-teacher, anti-education crowd out there? I think the answer is probably yes.

The interesting thing is, I know many people within the teaching profession who over the years have been supporters of the Conservative Party, perhaps in the days of Bill Davis or, previously, John Robarts, and subsequent to that. Even people who were supporters, who were active in the Conservative Party, are deeply disappointed when they see this government constantly trying to fan the anti-teacher flames in the province and bring forward legislation that they believe is contrary to the interests of public education. In years gone by, some of the greatest defenders of public education were in fact found on the government benches, in the Conservative, the Liberal and the New Democratic parties. When Bill Davis came to office as the Premier of this province, he was noted for his contribution to public education, and we did not see the kind of anti-teacher sentiment expressed, fanning the flames—

Interjection.

Mr Bradley: Listen, there were contentious issues that arose between members of the teaching profession and the government of the day, but they were resolved. There was a lot of good discussion, some compromises were made and those matters were resolved. Today it’s just confrontation after confrontation.

I am convinced that if we were not on the eve of calling a provincial election, this government would have brought in legislation that would be what we call clean legislation; in other words, no riders to it, no poison pill in the legislation, no hostages, because they would have wanted to see the students back in the classroom where

they want to be, where the parents want them to be and where members of the teaching profession want to be. This government, if it truly wanted to do that, would have brought forward legislation of that kind.

I thought Ian Urquhart, in today’s Toronto Star, captured the feeling of most people in this province. The member for Brampton smiles, but very often I’ve heard government members quote Ian Urquhart in the House. Let me quote the eminent columnist from the Toronto Star:

“It should be noted, however, that the government almost gleefully seized in the lockout as a talking point. Although the Tories have been vitriolic in their criticisms of the ‘union bosses’ in the dispute, they have been careful not to criticize the board. But the Tories could have ended the lockout much sooner if they had been willing to compromise with the opposition parties on the contents of the legislation. What galled the opposition is that the government chose to tack onto the bill a section further restricting teachers’ ability to work to rule, not just in Toronto’s Catholic elementary schools, but across the whole province. One could as easily ask Premier Eves: ‘Are you in favour of the students or scoring cheap political points at McGuinty’s expense?’ The bottom line, then, is that there is plenty of blame to spread around here, but ultimately the buck stops at the government’s door. If the Tories had wanted, they could have had Toronto’s Catholic school kids back in class two weeks ago. They chose another option, for political reasons.” And that’s most unfortunate.

Again I say to my good friend of long standing in the House, the Attorney General of this province, that if we did not have an election pending with a very strong Liberal candidate in the riding of Lanark-Carlton—a former Conservative as well, I’m told—we probably would have had a resolution of this matter. I find it most disappointing that the government has chosen this route. Of course, they have chosen a political answer to this instead of choosing a proper compromise.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate? The Chair recognizes the member for Toronto-Danforth.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): Thank you, Speaker. I like the way you say Toronto-Danforth. That’s my riding, and I want to introduce Joe Witalis from the Toronto-Danforth riding, who’s sitting in the gallery today and who is here day after day witnessing the debacle that’s going on right now. I’m very pleased that we have a member from the community witnessing this every day, because what is happening here is truly disgusting and so transparent. The government didn’t get away with it this time—they tried.

I was at their platform announcement—I went up there. It was pouring rain, and of course they wouldn’t let me in. And because it wasn’t a government announcement, I didn’t try to get in, as I do in this place when they try to lock me out. This government likes this lockout stuff. When they try to lock me out of government announcements, when they choose to have them in their own caucus committee room, I do demand to be let in.

But I understood this was their platform announcement. I went out and waited in the rain to comment after the fact. Obviously one of the hot-button issues from a desperate government that is down in the polls and grasping for hot-button issues to boost their re-election chances is to ban teachers' strikes and lockouts. What we said is that they took a page from Dalton McGuinty some time ago, who introduced banning teachers' strikes but abandoned it, thankfully. It was a good thing that they abandoned that.

Ms Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): Smile when you say that name, Marilyn.

1720

Ms Churley: One of the Liberals wants me to smile as I say that. I think it's a good thing they abandoned that, but then the Tories, who were opposed to it at the time, have now taken it on as their own. The Tories, who said they didn't support that in the past, have adopted Jim Flaherty's platform agenda when he was running for leadership. No doubt about it, he must be feeling pretty proud and puffed up today, because his hot-button, ultra-right-wing ideas have now been stolen by Ernie Eves to get re-elected. That was one of the hot-button issues that was announced that day.

Guess what else happened that day? You've heard it here time and time again.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): They didn't call an election.

Ms Churley: They didn't call an election, because it didn't work, but what they did do, by strange coincidence—I remember being asked about it that day. I said, "Yep, it's a strange coincidence" that on that very day that the Catholic elementary school board locked out the teachers who had been on work-to-rule—as the police sometimes work to rule. They provide the safety of our communities. The government doesn't intervene then. As I understand, 12 other boards across this province were, and I presume still are, working to rule. That very day when they announced their election platform to ban strikes and lockouts, by coincidence the Catholic school board locked out its teachers, and the government said, "Oh, no, it's just a coincidence. It has nothing to do with our announcement."

But then some very strange things started to happen around this place. The NDP didn't introduce, as the Liberals did, another piece of legislation. From day one—or the next day—we introduced amendments that would essentially clean up the bill, would take out this odious piece redefining teachers' jobs. As the member for St Catharines just said, if the government wants to debate that, let them debate it. If they want to make it into an election platform, so be it. Let the people decide. But to tack that on to this particular legislation is odious and so transparent that it's laughable.

I would say to the government House leader and the Minister of Energy, when they were on their feet last week giving out my name and number time after time and saying, "Marilyn Churley is keeping 69,000 kids out of the classroom; phone her and complain," I received

very few phone calls. I was surprised. I was ready; I was braced. My phone number was out there all over the place. I got more calls in support of what we're doing than against—many more calls.

I was surprised at the lack of calls coming from parents on this, because yes, parents are disgruntled, parents are stressed, parents are very unhappy about that. Why wouldn't they be? We all are when the kids aren't in the classroom. They all want something done. But this time they get it. The government did not succeed this time in fooling the people. You can fool some of the people some of the time, but this time they did not fool anyone but their own supporters, like Angela Kennedy, who is, as has been mentioned before, the Tory nominee in my colleague Michael Prue's Beaches-East York riding. She, as I understand it, was the trustee who made the motion that day to lock the teachers out.

Then of course there's the connection to Paul Christie, who happens to be making an enormous amount of money—I forget how much, but well over \$100,000—

Mr Prue: It's \$185,000.

Ms Churley: Is it \$185,000? He's making \$185,000 at the public school board doing odious, awful things to our communities and our schools.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): Oh, Marilyn.

Ms Churley: I believe he was also House leader Chris Stockwell's campaign manager in his failed leadership campaign.

But look at all of these connections. We know what's going on. The parents know what's going on, and they want something done about it.

The other thing I'd like to say is that for some reason the government didn't have night sittings last week. On one hand, they're out there saying, "Call Marilyn Churley and her colleagues and complain. They won't pass our legislation, and she's keeping these kids out of school." But at the same time they were not bothering to try to ram it through like they try to ram through most of their legislation that we disagree with: they weren't sitting at night.

I was out there in the hallways when the government House leader was being scrummed by the media, and I have to say his explanation was, as always, highly entertaining but, as usual, quite inaccurate in terms of how this place works. He was trying to tell the media—they weren't buying it, and that's one of the few times they interrupted a scrum, actually, because it was just so off-base, what he was saying. He was saying, "Well, we didn't sit in the night because it really doesn't speed things up."

Hon Mr Stockwell: It doesn't.

Ms Churley: It does. He's arguing with me again.

Let me tell you how it works. Yes, it's quite right that you can't debate one bill in the same day, in the afternoon and the evening. But what you can do is debate it in the afternoon and then debate it again the following night. That gives you an extra session to deal with it. You

could have dealt with this thing much faster, but instead you wanted the kids left out there.

Interjection.

Ms Churley: He wants to stand on a point of order, but there's no point of order here.

If you wanted to get those kids back in the classroom, you could have done it faster. But, Mr Speaker, you know as well as I do why this government didn't try to ram this piece of legislation through. They were going to call an election. They were hoping that they could call an election, using their legislation banning lockouts, to have a lot of angry parents out there and a lot of angry kids out there, but in particular the parents, having the opposition being beaten up to justify their legislation and banning strikes.

Interjection.

Ms Churley: Stop chirping at me, I would say to the member.

We all know what's going on here. The media know it, the public know it, the parents know it.

I had also the interesting privilege of watching the labour minister being scrummed before he went into cabinet on Wednesday. He was all puffed up. He came into the scrum, and the media were asking him, "You're so anxious to get this through, why aren't you calling night sittings?" He says, "The opposition, as usual, are interfering with the democratic process in this place and they're using the kids as hostages." He would be interrupted by the media and they said, "OK, why aren't you sitting at night?" "Well, it's the opposition interfering with democracy and not allowing those 69,000 kids back in the classroom," over and over again. He was on message, let me tell you. That was the message of the day and that's all he could say in that puffed-up, arrogant way of his, saying, "Well, it's the opposition not allowing the kids back in the classroom, huh, huh, huh." That's what he was doing.

Ms Pupatello: How will Hansard get that in? How will Hansard record that?

Ms Churley: I have to practise that imitation, but he did it over and over—the labour minister.

You know what? People are not buying it. They do know what's going on here. I'm pleased to say that people are getting it and recognize that the government is using their kids as pawns in their pre-election bid. Getting up in this place day after day after day and saying it's us keeping the kids out must be extremely frustrating to the parents out there watching this go round and round. Can you imagine, if you were one of those parents? You see the Liberals get up and say, "Well, if you'd passed our clean piece of legislation, the kids would be back at school." Then they listen to us saying, "Well, if you'd passed our amendment to their bill, they would have been back even before the Liberals introduced their piece of back-to-work legislation." The Tories are saying, "Well, if you would pass our legislation, they'd be back."

What does this mean to the people out there who just want to get their kids back in school, and what does this

mean to the teachers who were locked out? They didn't go on strike; they were in the classroom day after day taking care of the kids, teaching the kids, and that's where they wanted to be. Then by this weird coincidence—I'll just call it that for now—the board decided to lock them out.

I can assure you, I've talked to many of those teachers and I know that they have been making every single effort that they can make to get back in the classroom. But every time they went to the board with a new proposal the board turned them down. The most appalling to me was their recent offer last week. The kids could have been back in school that day, had the board agreed. You wonder who was talking to whom on the phone about that one.

1730

What did the board say? The board said—and I'm paraphrasing here—"It's too soon." That was an interesting comment, wasn't it, for somebody who might want to get the kids back in the classroom and resolve this issue? "It's too soon."

The second reason that the board gave was, "An arbitrator would not be able to take ability to pay into account." Mr Speaker, you will remember, because we objected to it, when the Tories changed that law. Now, in the process of arbitration, you can look at the ability to pay. So it's not even factual.

There's a lot of misinformation being given here to try to fool the people and, once again, blame the teachers and blame the opposition here. We're not having any of it. We yknow, because it's very clear, that arbitration law under this government allows the ability to pay to be taken into account.

The other thing that should be taken into account is an issue that's very important to the Catholic elementary school teachers in this province, and that's retention. They've got a real issue here. This is not nonsense. They've got a problem. They are not being paid as much as other teachers are in the system. They are having trouble retaining their teachers. They're concerned that over the long run—it's already happening—they're going to lose their qualified teachers. This is an incredibly important issue to the children and to the teachers. Yes, that could also be taken into account, but isn't that what we want: a fair solution to this? I can't think of a fairer way—well, I can, of course: the amendment we made, to use a standard, clean—as everybody is referring to it—simple piece of back-to-work legislation. Our amendment included fair arbitration. Their arbitration in fact isn't fair, but the teachers were willing to go there anyway. They made their intentions known, that they were willing to go back in the classroom and have this arbitration process put in place, with the ability to pay taken into account, and yet the board turned it down. Here we are this week in this situation, where the kids are still out of school, the parents are still scrambling to try to find care for their children and worried about their children's education.

I just want to tell you a bit about the amendment that we put forward, which the government should have accepted. It would have provided an end to the lockout of the teachers. If the parties had not executed a collective agreement within seven days of passage of the act, the matter in dispute would be referred to the mediator-arbitrator. The parties would then have a further seven days to agree on a mediator-arbitrator—and that's fair, for both parties to agree, but they were willing to accept the government's rules under arbitration. If they cannot agree, the Minister of Labour would appoint one who, in his opinion, is—this is quite a sensible way to resolve this—a person with experience as an arbitrator or mediator or expertise in labour relations and education matters. Then the mediator would have had 90 days after being appointed to make an award that is consistent with the Education Act and its regulations. There's a part II to that amendment as well.

What we asked the government to do was very fair and reasonable under those circumstances. We asked the government to accept a process that everybody could at least live with to unlock the doors and get the kids back in the classroom. We all say in this House that that is our objective. But then the government came forward with a piece of legislation that is unfair to the teachers but, even worse, came forward with a piece of legislation that they knew darn well we couldn't support. They knew that. They know about the NDP's principled response to this kind of thing. But they put it forward anyway, knowing darn well that the New Democratic Party would be unable to support it.

That again ties in with the whole theory that this was manufactured, that these kids were the victims of this government's plan to use them in an election campaign to bolster their re-election efforts. Well, it didn't work, did it? These kids are still out, and you can stand up all you want and puff out your chests and say whatever it is you say about the opposition. The reality is, you're the guys who had every opportunity to work with them and the board to get the kids back in the classroom, and you didn't do it.

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre): With all the rhetoric that's been going around here this afternoon, I think people are forgetting why we're here. The education bill that we have proposed is designed with one thing in mind, and that is to get 69,000 children back into school. That's the only reason. There's talk about, "It's being hostile to teachers," it's hostile to this, that or the other thing. Our philosophy is that, whether it's teachers' strikes, teacher walkouts, lockouts or teachers working to rule, it's all detrimental to the student. That is the reason that we are taking the action that we are today.

The NDP and the Liberals are saying, "Oh well, we've introduced our amendments or our own bill." Forget about the politics. Pass this bill. There's one reason for it: because teachers are refusing to administer standardized education quality and accountability tests, the children are not getting the extra help they need after school,

there's no co-curricular etc. That is what we are looking to do.

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): Certainly it's very important to stand here today and speak out, not only on behalf of the 70,000 students but their mothers, fathers and grandparents, who have been put through virtual hell by the political antics of this government. They forget that families are being disrupted. They forget about the cost there is—extra babysitting fees, child care. They don't care about the stress they're putting on the lives of teachers and their families. That's what they've done, basically, by doing a double-take on this bill, which could have easily been passed if they did what we've done in the past in this House: a simple bill asking for a return to work. That would have gone by here two weeks ago. Instead they're putting their political agenda in Bill 28 with part II.

By doing this, the Conservative government of Ernie Eves is continuing the good tradition started by that famous educator—I think his name is Oklahoma John Snobelen: create a crisis, keep fermenting a crisis, keep bashing public education and teachers, and you get votes. That's what Bill 28 is: a cheap political stunt that they're doing in desperation to try and get people anxious about schools, and essentially make people think it's someone else's fault that their children are not in school. Parents and students are suffering because this government is playing pure, cheap politics at the expense of these children, their parents, their grandparents and their families.

Over the weekend I was at the 75th anniversary of Loretto Abbey. It's one of the finest educational institutions in North America. Loretto Abbey is part of the Catholic school system here in Toronto. It was founded by Loretto nuns from Ireland going back to 1846. These are the traditions of sacrifice that built Catholic education in Toronto. These nuns, along with lay staff, have built some of the finest schools, as I said, in North America, whether they be elementary or high school. Loretto Abbey is typical of the sacrifice and dedication Catholic families and teachers and the Catholic clergy and nuns have made toward education. That's the spirit that built these schools with very little resources, in poor buildings, in substandard facilities. Yet they believed in teaching children and loved teaching children, as most of the teachers in our Catholic schools today do.

1740

Instead, these Catholic teachers have been locked out of their classrooms, and this government has been smiling over the there for the last two weeks because they've been locked out. They think this is good. You've made a political joke of this because it fits your political agenda. You refuse to pass a clean bill that could have had these children back in school two weeks ago. Instead, you've gone along with the John Snobelen school of educational philosophy: create a crisis; create more crisis; get people all angry at someone; bash teachers; bash education. They get their redneck votes this way. It's such a cheap stunt. It's so transparent. The public out there is not buying it. They know that Ernie Eves and the

Conservative MPPs are desperate to try and get votes. They do this on the backs of children who can't defend themselves.

I know the member from Kitchener is standing there. He wants to bash teachers some more because he thinks that's what gets them votes. He's proud to be a teacher basher but he doesn't realize that when he's bashing teachers, he's bashing children. He's bashing children in kindergarten, grades 1, 2, 3, all the way to grade 8. The member from Kitchener is happy to do this. They're glad when they're bashing teachers. That's when they're at their happiest.

Bill 28 continues that tradition, which does nothing but create havoc in our schools for their political ends. I say to all the teachers, parents and students in the Catholic school system in Toronto not to buy this teacher-bashing agenda. Don't feed this government's appetite for crisis. Support your children. Support your local schools.

I ask you again, after eight years of this Conservative government—they've had eight years—are your schools any better in Toronto, in Kitchener, in Kingston? After eight years of bashing teachers, of crisis, after eight years of Mr Snobelen and Eves and their likes, they have basically wreaked havoc upon our schools and hurt children. Don't forget what they've done to our schools and our children, whether it be in Brampton, where they're bashing teachers and bashing children—they would rather have children be locked out of their schools than do their jobs, which they could have done, as I said, two weeks ago. We could have had our children back in school. Instead, the members on the Conservative side are interested in fomenting anxiety; they're interested in fomenting more crises for cheap political gain. Cheap political gain, that's all this is about.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I'd hate to think that my friend Colle, when he was teaching, wouldn't have written a report card. I'd hate to think my friend Colle, when he was teaching, wouldn't meet with parents. I'd hate to think my friend Colle, when he was teaching, wouldn't administer tests. I would hate to think my friend Colle, when he was teaching, wouldn't do those good things that we're asking teachers to do when they go back. When I talk to the parents in my riding whose kids are on strike, they think they should be administering tests and meeting with parents.

This separates us from you. When we go to a campaign, I have no trouble being on my side, because when I stand up, I'm going to tell my parents that I believe teachers should be doing testing, they should do report cards, they should meet with you and they should go to graduation. You take your side and I'll take mine. Let's see who gets together.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

Minister. Pardon me. The Chair will recognize and give the floor to the member.

Mr Bisson: I haven't been called that yet. Mr Speaker, it's a premonition; it has to be. Are you sure you want to leave this place? Anyway, that's another story.

There are three points that I want to make very quickly.

The government was elected in 1995, and I remember John Snobelen said it best when he was first sworn in as a cabinet minister. He went to that very special meeting with the bureaucrats and said, "We will create a crisis in education in order to create the backdrop necessary to allow us to make the fundamental changes that we want in the system of education."

What we're seeing under this bill is no different. Marilyn Churley, the member for Toronto-Danforth, said it in her speech: if the government wanted this bill, they could have done a couple of things. They could have brought this bill in for night sittings. They could have done all kinds of things to get it in quickly. Instead, what they're trying to do is blame the opposition.

We know how the rules of this House operate. The government can pass any bill it wants in three days. They decided to take a longer period of time. Why? Because there's politics in this. They were hoping that if they took the position they did, they would go up in the polls and they'd be able to call an election.

Well, history has proven that they did what they did. They didn't get the bounce in the polls. If anything, they fell and they weren't able to call the election, so now they're moving forward.

I want to remember Mr Snobelen because he's no longer here. He did create the crisis in education. The government continues to create a crisis in education. This government certainly has an agenda in education that I believe is not, by and large, in keeping with where the public wants to go.

That's the second point I want to make: people are tired of teacher-bashing. As I travel around the province, and I do a fair amount of it, people are tired of teacher-bashing. They've said, "Listen, enough is enough. Move on with the issues that need to be dealt with in education. There are some real issues to be dealt with. Let's stop making teachers scapegoats." I think that's one of the reasons you didn't get a bounce in the polls.

I would be remiss if I didn't say, in the last of the three points I want to make, that this is number 103 of the time allocations passed by this government. Stockwell would have been spinning in his seat over here, as third party member, if our government or any government had ever tried to pass time allocation motions to 10% of what this government has done. I just want to remind members of the House that this is number 103 in time allocation motions. That's pretty dictatorial, if you ask me.

The Acting Speaker: That exhausts the time available for debate.

Mr Clark has moved government notice of motion number 29. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1747 to 1757.

The Acting Speaker: All in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted
Baird, John R.
Barrett, Toby
Beaubien, Marcel
Chudleigh, Ted
Clark, Brad
Clement, Tony
Coburn, Brian
Cunningham, Dianne
DeFaria, Carl
Dunlop, Garfield
Ecker, Janet
Elliott, Brenda
Eves, Ernie
Galt, Doug
Gilchrist, Steve
Gill, Raminder

Hardeman, Ernie
Hastings, John
Hudak, Tim
Jackson, Cameron
Johns, Helen
Johnson, Bert
Kells, Morley
Klees, Frank
Marland, Margaret
Martiniuk, Gerry
Maves, Bart
Mazzilli, Frank
Miller, Norm
Molinari, Tina R.
Munro, Julia
Mushinski, Marilyn
Newman, Dan

O'Toole, John
Ouellette, Jerry J.
Runciman, Robert W.
Sampson, Rob
Spina, Joseph
Sterling, Norman W.
Stewart, R. Gary
Stockwell, Chris
Tascona, Joseph N.
Tsubouchi, David H.
Turnbull, David
Wettlaufer, Wayne
Wilson, Jim
Witmer, Elizabeth
Young, David

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed to the motion will please rise one at a time and be counted by the Clerk.

Nays

Agostino, Dominic
Bartolucci, Rick
Bisson, Gilles
Bountrogianni, Marie
Boyer, Claudette
Bradley, James J.
Brown, Michael A.
Bryant, Michael
Caplan, David
Churley, Marilyn
Colle, Mike
Crozier, Bruce

Curling, Alvin
Di Cocco, Caroline
Dombrowsky, Leona
Duncan, Dwight
Hampton, Howard
Hoy, Pat
Kennedy, Gerard
Kormos, Peter
Kwinter, Monte
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Levac, David
Martel, Shelley

McMeekin, Ted
Parsons, Ernie
Patten, Richard
Peters, Steve
Prue, Michael
Pupatello, Sandra
Ramsay, David
Sergio, Mario
Smitherman, George
Sorbara, Greg

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 49; the nays are 34.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

It now being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 6:45 this evening.

The House adjourned at 1800.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon / L'hon James K. Bartleman

Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Gary Carr

Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers

Deputy Clerk / Sous-greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks at the Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Agostino, Dominic (L)	Hamilton East / -Est	Chief opposition whip / whip en chef de l'opposition
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Waterloo-Wellington	
Baird, Hon / L'hon John R. (PC)	Nepean-Carleton	Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs, deputy House leader / ministre de l'Énergie, ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones, leader parlementaire adjoint
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant	
Bartolucci, Rick (L)	Sudbury	Deputy opposition House leader / chef parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition
Beaubien, Marcel (PC)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	
Bisson, Gilles (ND)	Timmins-James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	Chief New Democratic Party whip / whip en chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Bountrogianni, Marie (L)	Hamilton Mountain	
Boyer, Claudette (Ind)	Ottawa-Vanier	
Bradley, James J. (L)	St Catharines	
Brown, Michael A. (L)	Algoma-Manitoulin	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Bryant, Michael (L)	St Paul's	
Caplan, David (L)	Don Valley East / -Est	Deputy opposition whip / whip adjoint de l'opposition
Carr, Hon / L'hon Gary (PC)	Oakville	Speaker / Président
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Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Churley, Marilyn (ND)	Toronto-Danforth	
Clark, Hon / L'hon Brad (PC)	Stoney Creek	Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail
Cleary, John C. (L)	Stormont-Dundas- Charlottenburgh	
Clement, Hon / L'hon Tony (PC)	Brampton West-Mississauga / Brampton-Ouest-Mississauga	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Coburn, Hon / L'hon Brian (PC)	Ottawa-Orléans	Minister of Tourism and Recreation / ministre du Tourisme et des Loisirs
Colle, Mike (L)	Eglinton-Lawrence	
Conway, Sean G. (L)	Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	
Cordiano, Joseph (L)	York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston	
Crozier, Bruce (L)	Essex	
Cunningham, Hon / L'hon Dianne (PC)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Curling, Alvin (L)	Scarborough-Rouge River	
DeFaria, Hon / L'hon Carl (PC)	Mississauga East / -Est	Minister of Citizenship, minister responsible for seniors / ministre des Affaires civiques, ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Di Cocco, Caroline (L)	Sarnia-Lambton	
Dombrowsky, Leona (L)	Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington	
Duncan, Dwight (L)	Windsor-St Clair	Opposition House leader / chef parlementaire de l'opposition

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
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Eves, Hon / L'hon Ernie (PC)	Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey	Premier and President of the Executive Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif, ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales
Flaherty, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC)	Whitby-Ajax	Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation / ministre de l'Entreprise, des Débouchés et de l'Innovation
Galt, Hon / L'hon Doug (PC)	Northumberland	Minister without Portfolio, chief government whip / ministre sans portefeuille, whip en chef du gouvernement
Gerretsen, John (L)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	
Gilchrist, Steve (PC)	Scarborough East / -Est	
Gill, Raminder (PC)	Bramalea-Gore- Malton-Springdale	
Gravelle, Michael (L)	Thunder Bay-Superior North / -Nord	
Guzzo, Garry J. (PC)	Ottawa West-Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest-Nepean	
Hampton, Howard (ND)	Kenora-Rainy River	Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Hardeman, Hon / L'hon Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre associé des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Hastings, John (PC)	Etobicoke North / -Nord	
Hodgson, Chris (PC)	Haliburton-Victoria-Brock	
Hoy, Pat (L)	Chatham-Kent Essex	
Hudak, Hon / L'hon Tim (PC)	Erie-Lincoln	Minister of Consumer and Business Services / ministre des Services aux consommateurs et aux entreprises
Jackson, Cameron (PC)	Burlington	
Johns, Hon / L'hon Helen (PC)	Huron-Bruce	Minister of Agriculture and Food / ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation
Johnson, Bert (PC)	Perth-Middlesex	Deputy Speaker, Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Vice-Président, Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Kells, Morley (PC)	Etobicoke-Lakeshore	
Kennedy, Gerard (L)	Parkdale-High Park	
Klees, Hon / L'hon Frank (PC)	Oak Ridges	Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports
Kormos, Peter (ND)	Niagara Centre / -Centre	New Democratic Party House leader / chef parlementaire du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Kwinter, Monte (L)	York Centre / -Centre	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Glengarry-Prescott-Russell	
Levac, Dave (L)	Brant	
Marchese, Rosario (ND)	Trinity-Spadina	
Marland, Margaret (PC)	Mississauga South / -Sud	
Martel, Shelley (ND)	Nickel Belt	
Martin, Tony (ND)	Sault Ste Marie	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
Maves, Bart (PC)	Niagara Falls	
Mazzilli, Frank (PC)	London-Fanshawe	
McDonald, AL (PC)	Nipissing	
McGuinty, Dalton (L)	Ottawa South / -Sud	Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition
McLeod, Lyn (L)	Thunder Bay-Atikokan	
McMeekin, Ted (L)	Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough- Aldershot	
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound-Muskoka	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Molinari, Hon / L'hon Tina R. (PC)	Thornhill	Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre associée des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Munro, Julia (PC)	York North / -Nord	
Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	
Mushinski, Marilyn (PC)	Scarborough Centre / -Centre	
Newman, Hon / L'hon Dan (PC)	Scarborough Southwest / -Sud-Ouest	Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / ministre associé de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
O'Toole, John R. (PC)	Durham	
Ouellette, Hon / L'hon Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles
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Patten, Richard (L)	Ottawa Centre / -Centre	
Peters, Steve (L)	Elgin-Middlesex-London	
Phillips, Gerry (L)	Scarborough-Agincourt	
Prue, Michael (ND)	Beaches-East York	
Pupatello, Sandra (L)	Windsor West / -Ouest	
Ramsay, David (L)	Timiskaming-Cochrane	
Runciman, Hon / L'hon Robert W. (PC)	Leeds-Grenville	Minister of Public Safety and Security / ministre de la Sécurité et de la Sécurité publique
Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Davenport	
Sampson, Rob (PC)	Mississauga Centre / -Centre	
Sergio, Mario (L)	York West / -Ouest	Deputy opposition whip / whip adjoint de l'opposition
Smitherman, George (L)	Toronto Centre-Rosedale / Toronto-Centre-Rosedale	
Sorbara, Greg (L)	Vaughan-King-Aurora	
Spina, Joseph (PC)	Brampton Centre / -Centre	
Sterling, Hon / L'hon Norman W. (PC)	Lanark-Carleton	Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
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Tascona, Joseph N. (PC)	Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford	
Tsubouchi, Hon / L'hon David H. (PC)	Markham	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Culture / président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement, ministre de la Culture
Turnbull, Hon / L'hon David (PC)	Don Valley West / -Ouest	Associate Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation / ministre associé de l'Entreprise, des Débouchés et de l'Innovation
Wettlaufer, Wayne (PC)	Kitchener Centre / -Centre	
Wilson, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC)	Simcoe-Grey	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Witmer, Hon / L'hon Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener-Waterloo	Deputy Premier, Minister of Education / vice-première ministre, ministre de l'Éducation
Wood, Bob (PC)	London West / -Ouest	
Young, Hon / L'hon David (PC)	Willowdale	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Vacant	Mississauga West / -Ouest	

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Ces listes figurent dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et du premier lundi de chaque mois. Par contre, une liste des circonscriptions paraît si l'espace est disponible.

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Fourth Session, 37th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Quatrième session, 37^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

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Monday 2 June 2003

Lundi 2 juin 2003



Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 2 June 2003

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 2 juin 2003

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ONTARIO HOME PROPERTY TAX RELIEF FOR SENIORS ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 SUR L'ALLÈGEMENT DE L'IMPÔT FONCIER RÉSIDENTIEL POUR LES PERSONNES ÂGÉES DE L'ONTARIO

Mrs Ecker moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 43, An Act to provide Ontario home property tax relief for seniors / Projet de loi 43, Loi prévoyant un allègement de l'impôt foncier résidentiel pour les personnes âgées de l'Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr David Christopherson): Do you wish to make remarks, Minister?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Finance): Yes, and I will be sharing my time with my colleague from Halton, and perhaps the MPP from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, but definitely the MPP from Halton.

I think it's very appropriate to stand in the House today to begin the second reading debate on this new initiative for seniors at the beginning of June, which is Seniors' Month. I think the timing is quite appropriate. I'm very pleased to kick off second reading debate today.

As the members of the House will know, the budget that I introduced this spring—our fifth consecutive balanced budget, I should point out, the first time that has occurred since 1908—was a budget that was based very much on the input and advice that we received from people from all walks of life across the province. We actually engaged in one of the most extensive pre-budget consultation processes that has ever occurred. I was in over 17 communities. We visited, or I heard from, over 1,300 individuals representing many, many different organizations, from our agricultural community to our seniors community, health care, education, the business community, the social service sector—a wide range of people and organizations that provided input to the government.

There were a couple of priorities that came through all of those consultations as we sifted through the written material and the submissions. First of all, there was a continued recognition that tax relief is something that has contributed to the economic growth in this province,

something that is helping to support the job growth that we've seen, something that has helped our economy after 9/11 to bounce back very quickly and will, quite frankly, help us bounce back from the current challenge that we're seeing from SARS that has hit this province. Tax cuts, tax relief was very much seen as a priority that people wanted us to continue to focus on.

The second one, of course, dealt with the investments in the most important programs for people, for families, things like a stronger health care system, a good quality public education system, strong and safe communities—that was something we heard as well. The budget speaks to that in many ways.

We also heard about the need for accountability, more accountability for the tax dollars that we, in government, spend. Taxpayers acknowledge that there may well be increased investment in many areas, but they want to make sure that that money is being used for the priorities that they think are important, or that we're getting the results that they think are important. So increased accountability was something we heard a fair bit about as well.

1850

One of the unspoken priorities, one of the other concerns that came through loudly and clearly, was a concern about family, about children, about our parents, about our grandparents, and making sure that the supports and services were in place to keep our families strong as well. Certainly seniors are very much a part of our family. For all of us here in Ontario, when you look at how much this province has achieved, when you look at how prosperous this province is—the jobs we have, the quality of life we have—much of that is attributable to the hard work and the contributions our seniors have made over their lifetime. One of the steps we took in the budget was to recognize that contribution from seniors, to acknowledge that they are part of the success we enjoy today. We have chosen to do that by providing additional tax relief for our seniors.

The Ontario Home Property Tax Relief for Seniors Act, which is what we're debating tonight, if approved by the Legislature, would provide eligible seniors with a refund for the educational portion of the property tax they pay on their principal residence, whether they are renters or actual homeowners.

For many seniors who live on fixed incomes, rising costs like property taxes eat into the income they have. So the budget proposes to complete our government's commitment to provide further property tax relief and to provide that tax relief in a way that will be a real benefit

for seniors. One of the things we saw when we did our first property tax cut on the residential side was that many homeowners—many renters, many property owners—never actually saw that tax relief because many municipalities, for many valid reasons—and it's certainly not a criticism of municipalities—actually moved into that tax room, so people did not see that tax relief. We are proposing to complete our commitment on further residential property tax relief and to do that by focusing it on seniors.

Once this legislation is approved, seniors who own or rent their home, as I said, would be eligible for a credit that will reimburse them for the educational portion of their residential property tax. That will begin on July 1 this year, subject to passage of this legislation.

What that will mean is an average annual net saving of \$475 for each senior household in the province of Ontario. In total, we have over 945,000 households—senior renters or owners—that will benefit from this tax relief. It will be approximately \$450 million in tax relief going directly to our seniors—a very, very important support.

To qualify for this credit, owners or renters who are seniors will apply once a year for this rebate—again, this is a process that has occurred many times before. As soon as the legislation is passed, we will be providing information about how they can do that.

I think it is important to recognize that the Ontario Home Property Tax Relief for Seniors Act would provide relief over and above what is now offered by the existing Ontario tax credits program. Many seniors will know that they currently qualify for a combined property tax and sales tax credit that is aimed at low- and moderate-income seniors, and that continues. This is in addition to that. So every senior who is an owner or renter will benefit at the end of the day from this additional tax relief.

It's also important to recognize, because I know seniors who consider public education to be very important and I know some of the critics here in this Legislature and beyond have tried to say that tax relief for seniors is somehow going to result in a decrease in money available for public education, that that, quite simply, is not the case.

The money that goes to our schools—the increased money that is going to our school boards for our schools—is based on clear criteria: for example, the need in schools; the number of students. It is not at all based on the level of education property taxes that are being paid by seniors or others. I think they can rest assured that the relief they will receive, should the Legislature pass this bill, is not in any way diminishing, jeopardizing or threatening the increased investments we have and will continue to make in our schools.

I think it's also important to recognize that, as I said, many issues we addressed in this budget are important to seniors. For example, in other budget legislation that this chamber will be considering over the course of the next couple of weeks we're proposing that certain types of life leases be exempt from land transfer taxes. A life lease is a rather unique form of seniors' housing where seniors

receive the exclusive right to occupy a residential unit for life in return for an upfront payment and monthly payment fees. Life lease projects, such supports for seniors, are usually sponsored by religious or charitable groups and they provide a sense of community for seniors who are in that particular complex. Legislation that is before the House recognizes the unique nature of life leases. We propose to exempt from land transfer tax life leases that are sponsored by registered charities or other non-profit organizations. This exemption would be retroactive to when land transfer tax was applied to the unregistered property. This measure could result in average savings of approximately \$1,500 per unit—so another important support.

Applause.

Hon Mrs Ecker: Some applause here from my colleagues. This will be another important support to help seniors and their housing needs and to keep them independent in their homes.

It's also important to recognize that one of the things we see seniors and many families do is to accept the responsibility to care for infirm or dependent relatives, whether it's a spouse, parent or grandparent, to offer that care in our own homes, or perhaps to go out of our way to help our parent or grandparent stay in their own home and be independent there and incur costs and effort to do that. I think families who are able and can support their relatives, who can help give them a kind of care that can never be available in our retirement or nursing home institutions, despite the quality of the staff and the excellent work that they can do there, should be supported and encouraged to help their parents, grandparents or spouses, people with disabilities or dependent individuals. The proposals I've put forward in the budget seek to do that. We'll have a series of enhancements and improvements to tax credits for people with disabilities and family caregivers. We estimate that this increased tax support would provide annual benefits of approximately \$50 million to 165,000 family caregivers and people with disabilities, providing an average saving of about \$300 each.

We listen to the opposition across the way criticize this government when we provide tax relief for citizens. They like to portray that somehow or other it's some big corporation that is getting tax relief. Frankly, you can set aside for the moment for this debate the fact that if our business community does not have competitive tax rates, they do not stay here and invest here to provide new jobs for all our families that would benefit. Let's set that aside for a minute, because what the opposition would like people to believe, what they would like to see, is that somehow or other tax cuts or tax relief have no bearing on individuals, do not result in any benefits for individuals or families. This is quite the contrary. In our budgets, every piece of legislation we've brought forward has had tax relief for families, for individuals, for low-income residents etc—a great degree of tax relief for individuals. In this budget legislation we are proposing, to be discussed in the chamber this month, not only for

seniors on the property tax, but for life leases, as I mentioned, for caregivers, for people with disabilities, that is here. Other personal tax relief for individuals, those making \$75,000 or less, those at the low end, the modest-income Ontarians, more who are being relieved of having to pay any Ontario income tax—all that tax relief is targeted at individuals.

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That is the tax relief the opposition is saying—with great pride, actually, they stand up and say, “We’re going to take that away. We’re going to take away tax relief from our seniors. We’re going to take away tax relief for modest-income Ontarians. We’re going to take away tax breaks for people who are caring for a relative with a disability in their home.” It’s unconscionable that they believe that is the right way to go. On this side of the House, we believe that additional tax relief—

Interjections.

Hon Mrs Ecker: I hear some noes across the way from the Liberal Party. He stood in this chamber when I asked him about the seniors’ tax credit—Mr Smitherman, who I guess I could call the favourite attack dog, somehow thinks we should just say to the families who are suffering in quarantine and isolation because of SARS or have had a family member ill with SARS or perhaps tragically have lost a family member. This is the party opposite that says, somehow or other, that we should say to them that they don’t count; we should go off and have an election; it doesn’t matter what they’re going through. This, coming from across the way, I thought was not only insensitive but totally outrageous. This is the same party that has promised to take away tax relief from our seniors. It does boggle the mind, but that is the position they are taking. We on this side of the House agree on and recognize the need for tax relief.

Additional tax relief is part of the economic plan this government has been following: a plan of tax relief, balanced budgets, debt repayment, paying down debt—again, this is the first government that’s actually been able to stop the increases in debt and start bringing down government debt by \$5 billion. Tax relief, balanced budgets, debt repayment, setting key spending priorities to make sure we are focusing our dollars on the programs that families see as most important—health and education—is the economic plan we have been following, and it is a plan that has been working for seniors and for people in all walks of life.

Over a million new jobs in this province that our families are benefiting from; economic growth that has been faster than our trading partners’ significant increases in single-parent family and two-parent family incomes over the last several years; home ownership, an extremely important measure of the strength of your community, also up—these are the benefits of the economic plan we’ve been following and why we are continuing with it, so that those improvements and benefits can continue.

In the budget, as I said, key investment priorities are health and education. We have indeed addressed that.

Those are important for seniors as well. I mentioned earlier that some seniors wanted to assure themselves that tax relief for them would not result in any reduction in money for schools. Certainly the record shows and the commitments we’ve made in our budgets show and the audited statements show that we’ve actually been spending more on public education in this province for seniors’ grandchildren to make sure they are getting the education they need. Frankly, when you look at the increases for our public education system, \$12.9 billion was being spent when we were first elected to office. With the improvements, that has gone up to over \$14 billion this year. The improvements for next school year, again in the budget, are over \$15 billion. You’re seeing improvements in funding. For example, one of the boards in my riding, the Durham public board, is seeing a \$30-million increase in the investment they have for schools—far beyond the growth of enrolment. As a matter of fact, the board has actually had a modest decrease in enrolment this year, but still we are putting new investments in, and we’re giving multi-year commitments on that funding as well. That’s an important priority for families.

Education is also an important priority for future economic growth, because if you believe, as we believe on this side of the House, that one of the government’s jobs is to make sure we are doing what we can do to support more economic growth, more jobs, more prosperity, a strong public education system is very much a way to do that, to make sure that our students are getting the skills, the tools they need to succeed in whatever job, profession or trade they wish to follow in their life.

I know a lot of members of this chamber are engaged in spending a lot of their free time out knocking on doors in their communities, and one of the things you hear from seniors is a concern to make sure that their grandchildren are receiving the education they need. This budget this year, as my budget last year and previous budgets by my colleague Minister Flaherty and by our current Premier, Premier Eves, has sought to address that priority in public education.

We’ve also taken significant steps again this year to improve health spending in Ontario, and again health spending that will benefit seniors immensely. Not only have we increased spending by close to \$2 billion for health care—a significant investment. When you look at the record of this government, we’ve increased health spending by \$10 billion; it’s almost half of our budget. It’s an incredibly significant investment, \$10 billion, even though the contribution from Ottawa has declined. The members in this House, certainly on this side of the House, appreciate that when our health care program began in this country—a program that Canadians see as one of the ways they define themselves as Canadians, by talking about our health care system here in Canada—that program was a 50-50 partnership between Ottawa and the provinces. Today it is only 17 cents on the dollar that we get from Ottawa, and that’s even with the increases that they’ve given it, because it had sunk to 10 cents on the dollar.

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Culture): I hear a Liberal denying that over there.

Hon Mrs Ecker: Yes, that's right. The Liberals over there don't agree. They obviously haven't been paying attention to this. They certainly have not been out there as aggressively as Premier Harris was, as other Premiers, even Liberal Premiers across the country, as Premier Eves has been to say to Ottawa, first of all, "Thank you for going to 17 cents from 10 cents. Thank you, we're putting that money into health care." But we need to do more. They need to do more. We're prepared to do our part, we have, we've put that money on the table, we'll continue to do that, but we need to encourage Ottawa to do the same.

Again, as they're sitting there talking about the surpluses that they have in Ottawa—and listen, this is a good thing, that they have surpluses. But what that is, let's be clear, is more money that they've taken from our viewers out there tonight, if there is anyone who is watching this tonight. That's money that you don't have that they have taken for things they're not spending it on. I think we need to take—

Interjection.

Hon Mrs Ecker: What debt are they paying down? I hear from the honourable member, "Oh, they're paying down debt." Where did they pay down the debt this year? We've paid down \$5 billion on our debt. We've made sure that we keep doing that.

We certainly think that Ottawa—I've awakened them on the other side of the House—should continue to increase investments in health care, as every province is doing.

This money is going for investments in cancer research, for example. As we get older, we all face increased rates of cancer, and so we have made a significant investment, a \$1-billion investment in cancer research, because the experts have told us that if we focus our efforts, if we help them, we can actually find cures for some kinds of cancer. So we are putting our money again on the table, our commitment in real terms: \$1 billion for Ontarians for more cancer research.

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The other improvement that we made in this budget is support for more cataract surgeries. Again, for a senior who may well be active, independent, but needing cataract surgery, this is an important support for seniors. So new investments in our budget are going to increase procedures by some 15,000 cataract surgeries; very important.

In the budget, we talk about putting money forward for an action plan to help deal with osteoporosis, again something that many seniors are seeing and a challenge they're facing that can have significant negative impact on whether a senior can stay in their home. If they break a hip or whatever, sometimes that starts a terrible downward slide in terms of their health. It deteriorates. So we are putting in place an action plan to help prevent osteoporosis for our seniors.

An elder abuse strategy is also something that we have supported on this side of the House through our budget, because one of the hidden problems we've seen is seniors who are abused physically, mentally and emotionally by other relatives. It's a very tragic situation, and we are seeking to address that.

The Memory Project is one of the things—our seniors have incredible stories to tell us about their experiences and what they've learned—for example, veterans in World War I and World War II—to capture that live history from them. I think it's important to note that my colleague the Chair of the Management Board, Minister Tsubouchi is sitting with me tonight. He led the fight to make sure that the Ontario government was supporting the memorial at Juno Beach.

These are important contributions and supports for our seniors to recognize the contributions they've made, to make sure that we're capturing that living history, and that our children and grandchildren will remember it, know it, learn it and understand its significance.

We're also putting in important protection for Ontario retirement home residents, and increased long-term-care beds. In my riding, on the road that is not too far from my house, every time I go up there, there is a big sign that talks about the new Winbourne lodge, a SuperBuild project. My colleague the Minister for Long-Term Care, Mr Newman, and I were there to open it. It's a wonderful state-of-the-art facility. It's a place that all of us would be very proud to have our parents or grandparents live in. So again, it's an important investment that we've made here in Ontario to help support our seniors.

All of these things that we have put forward are important. They address the issues that I know seniors, whether parents or grandparents, are concerned about. We've had the opportunity to offer our seniors tax relief that will benefit them. Again, on this side of the House we see tax relief as a good step to take, as opposed to the Liberals on the other side, who don't believe in tax relief and want to take away the tax cuts that we have provided. This recognizes our seniors for the contributions they've made. It supports our seniors and helps them to live independent lives. It is through the hard work, commitment and lifetime contribution of our seniors that we have seen the benefits that we have all enjoyed here in Ontario—our prosperity, quality of life and freedom, because of the contributions of our seniors. So I would urge—and unfortunately I'm not very optimistic about what's going to happen with the Liberals across the way—all members of the House to support this legislation that we're debating tonight, the Ontario Home Property Tax Relief for Seniors Act, because it will benefit our parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles. It will make a significant improvement in the quality of their lives. So I hope at the end of the day, when they've thought about it, debated it and listened to my colleagues and I talk about the benefits, we can count on all members of the House supporting this very important legislation for our seniors.

The Acting Speaker: I understand the member for Halton wants to continue in the leadoff. Is that correct?

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton): I believe you understand correctly, Mr Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: You have the floor. Go for it.

Mr Chudleigh: Thank you.

Hon Brad Clark (Minister of Labour): Another senior.

Mr Chudleigh: "Another senior," the member says. I'm not quite, but I'm rapidly closing, as we all are. We're all getting a day older every day.

I want to thank the Minister of Finance for her wonderful comments, putting succinctly the importance of this bill to the people of Ontario. She mentioned briefly the seniors among us who served in the Second World War. June 6, barely four days away from now, is the day on which the Allied forces landed on Juno Beach and in fact the beaches of Normandy, Juno Beach being designated for the Canadians to land on. On June 6 this year we will be dedicating a monument to the Canadian soldiers who landed at that beach, gave of their lives and died on that beach, many of them. Some of them made it up to the headlands and on to fight the war. They did a valiant job, and many of them are now our seniors, the ones who represent so wonderfully the very best that is Canada. So it's a pleasure for me to address this House and talk about how the government is going to continue to fulfill its commitment to seniors in Bill 43, the Ontario Home Property Tax Relief for Seniors Act, 2003.

After that great war, World War II, many of those seniors, many of the seniors of today, returned from that war and joined the workers in the plants and factories, on the farms and in the communities of Ontario during that war. That was one of the first times that women across this province worked in the factories, did men's jobs, were part of the opening up of our society, the beginning, I suppose, of women's liberation that recognized that people were all equal, that they could do these jobs when pressed into service and enjoyed the service that they took part in and did a wonderful job of it.

As we went from a society that was dependent on factories and manufacturing and became more involved in the opportunities that presented themselves in the service sector, in the higher levels of manufacturing and technology, as we moved into that area, our society opened up. The seniors of today helped people move from one sector of our society, which was primarily I think agricultural prior to the Second World War. A great proportion of our population, perhaps 60% to 70% of our population, was rural-based. After the Second World War that number has continued to decline until today. If you take the 80% of production on Ontario farms today, it is probably accomplished by less than 1.5% of our population.

It's interesting, as you look at that particular statistic, as society has developed around the world, if you look at the ancient societies, the ones that achieved the greatest artistic developments were the societies that were able to feed themselves with less of their population involved. The Aztec culture that developed in Central Mexico was living in some extremely rich agricultural land. They

were able to crop that land extremely effectively so that the majority of their population didn't have to work on the land. They were able to pursue other activities—pottery, manufacturing, hunting, whatever those activities were. Some of the artistic things that the Aztecs built were based on the fact that they could feed themselves very easily based on their very efficient agricultural production.

Much of that same philosophy is true in Ontario today. It is true today because our seniors of today were able to create the agricultural expertise that took our agricultural lands to the heights they're at today. Surely we're amongst the leaders throughout the world in our ability to produce food on a minimum of agricultural land.

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This bill also acknowledges the contribution seniors have made in the past and what they continue to give their families and communities today. When I think of the number of volunteer seniors existing in my community today, it's mind-boggling. They're involved in almost every part of this society, whether it's a Scout troupe or a Girl Guide troupe or whether it's dealing with the cancer care system, where people are driving victims of cancer to treatments and back, people who can't get there by themselves. Many of those very difficult kinds of volunteering jobs are done by seniors. That's a wonderful thing for a community. It makes a community very, very strong.

If you look at the sports and activities that our youth are involved in, so often so many of the coaches and the people who drive to the park, the people who look after the needs of youth as they partake in sports, are seniors in our society, and they do such a wonderful job. In the culture area, whether it's the little theatre that practises down the street—those things are, by and large, dominated by seniors who give to their community, have given all of their lives and continue to give to their community.

Ontario's success and prosperity is due very much, in part, to the 1.5 million seniors who live in this province. They make this province the great place that it is to live in. Again, if you look at the seasons of the year, as we go through, the Santa Claus parade that takes place every year in your town is probably run and greatly staffed by seniors in our community.

Interjection: Including Santa.

Mr Chudleigh: Including Santa.

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): Well, sometimes; not always.

Mr Chudleigh: Well, Santa is very definitely a senior. So if we're not going to be nice to seniors, we're not going to be nice to Santa Claus. It's hard to imagine that anyone doesn't want to be nice to Santa Claus. Even though he's more than six months away, he has got his elves out watching, and we have to be very careful. He's keeping track of who's going to be naughty and who's going to be nice. So I want to tell you all, on both sides of this House, if you vote against this bill, Santa will mark it down. It will be a bad mark against you.

Hon Mr Clark: That's because Santa is a senior.

Mr Chudleigh: Santa is a senior.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): No, he's saying Santa's a whip.

Mr Chudleigh: Santa is the king of the seniors.

Mr Frank Mazzilli (London-Fanshawe): Actually, Santa came up with this idea during consultations.

Interjections.

Mr Chudleigh: Will Stewart and Michael Fogarty?

Interjection: Yes.

Mr Chudleigh: They are not seniors.

Interjection: Who is?

Mr Chudleigh: Will Stewart and Michael Fogarty are not seniors, but they're on their way to being seniors.

Mr Beaubien: They're heading toward seniorhood.

Mr Chudleigh: They're headed toward seniorhood, as are we all.

One of the other events in our communities that's just over now is the fireworks display that takes place on Victoria Day, and also July 1 now. It is setting off those fireworks that many of the fire departments do and, more often than not, the fire departments will bring in a senior. They will bring in a senior who has experience in how to handle pyrotechnics, and probably he may have learned that during his time in the Second World War in the army. That's another part that seniors are always more than willing to play. If something needs to be done, you'll find a senior and they'll be there to do it.

Seniors have really created an Ontario that is prosperous and proud. Ontario has moved from that old adage that we were hewers of wood and drawers of water. We've moved into the service sector. We've moved into the 21st century. That 21st century has put us amongst the leaders in the world as far as the quality of life in the place we live. Up until the last 10 years, Canada has been one of the best places in the world to live, if not number one. I think we were number one for seven years in a row, was it?

Mr Beaubien: Something like that.

Mr Chudleigh: We are number two or three now. You don't get there by accident, and so many of our seniors contributed in such a positive way to our getting there.

Our government recognizes and celebrates their achievements and the important roles they play in communities to help build a great quality of life. In fact, we have had the volunteerism awards for the last eight years of our government. This volunteerism recognizes the volunteer nature of seniors. Being involved in these award presentations for the last five or six years, it's amazing that when these people come forward they're receiving pins for five years of volunteerism or 10 or 15 years of volunteerism.

Mr Beaubien: What about the people with 50 years of service?

Mr Chudleigh: Some of them have 50 years of service. In your community as well. It happens in my community. I'm pleased to know that it happens in communities across Ontario. Some 50 years of service—and even in Stoney Creek. They have 50 years of service. It's

amazing that people will volunteer. It's got to be a labour of love. It's something that makes the quality of life in this province so positive, and we're so proud to be part of it. Our programs and services for seniors reflect our respect for them and include a broad range of initiatives from health care to safety and security to property tax cuts.

Almost every senior is a grandparent. One of the things that is incumbent on a grandparent—I happen to be a grandparent. I'm very proud of the fact I'm a grandparent.

Mr Beaubien: You're too young.

Mr Chudleigh: I'm a grandparent seven times. I have very productive children. I'm very proud of them. But I'm a grandparent seven times. It's one of your proudest moments when your grandchildren gather around you. I've got to be careful of this subject. I get a little teary when I talk about them. They really are a marvellous group. But they gather around, and the second-youngest one will look up and say, "Grandpa, can you tell us a story?"

Hon Dan Newman (Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Name names.

Mr Chudleigh: There's Chelsea, Tyler and Jennifer. And there's—

Mr Mazzilli: He can't remember them.

Mr Chudleigh: There's Ricky and there's Renee, whom we call Naynay. She's three and a half. She's the cutest little thing. Then there's Trevor and Tyler. I mentioned Trevor.

Mr Beaubien: You mentioned Tyler.

Mr Chudleigh: I didn't mention Trevor? And there's Lysay. Is that seven? That's all of them. I can also run through their birthdays, if you want. I know their birthdays. A good grandfather would always know the birthdays of his grandchildren.

Mr Beaubien: Do you know yours?

Mr Chudleigh: I know my birthday. It's just over. My birthday is the same as Marilyn Churley's and Bob Wood's. It's unusual that there are three birthdays in this House on the same day.

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: Same year too?

Mr Chudleigh: No, not the same year. I'm not sure who's younger. I shouldn't say. Marilyn Churley may get mad at me.

Hon Mr Clark: You're just a wealth of trivia.

Mr Chudleigh: Trivia comes to the floor when you have a lot of time.

We are proud of our commitment to seniors and are setting our goals to the highest standards for assisting seniors and their families, making Ontario the best place to live, work and raise a family. I'm sure anybody who has been watching this station or has been in this House for any length of time has heard us talk about living, working and raising a family in the best community in North America, the best community in the world.

But you know, part and parcel of that, part and parcel of every community is the seniors in that community and

how important they are to the community, which I've spoken about tonight.

Better health care for seniors: it's absolutely essential that we have health care that seniors can use when they need it, where they need it. It's very important, and we're committed to that. We've done so much in that area.

We want to ensure that our seniors have the supports they need to live safely and independently with dignity. Seniors are obviously happiest in their own homes where they can be surrounded by the things they're familiar with. We were talking about this at dinner tonight. It was interesting, we were defining the difference between stuff and junk. When you're surrounded by your things, that's stuff; when you're surrounded by somebody else's things, that's junk. So your stuff is good stuff, and that's what makes garage sales work.

I wander from the subject, I think.

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However, it's been a question of how we achieve this. How do we achieve the very best that is available for our seniors? We do this by investing in the areas that protect the health and well-being of seniors:

Home care—we're one of the leading jurisdictions in North America for home care;

Recreational opportunities—we're one of the leading jurisdictions in North America for recreational opportunities for seniors.

The 2003 Ontario budget introduced new initiatives that would help seniors remain in their homes and assist them with rising costs. The 2003 budget proposes to provide new property tax relief for seniors through Ontario's home property tax relief for seniors program. If approved, this bill would have the residential education property tax on seniors' principal residences refunded through this new tax program.

Hon Mr Clark: Who would vote against that?

Mr Chudleigh: I have no idea who would vote against that. It would be like voting against Santa Claus.

As the minister pointed out earlier this evening, that would mean about a \$475 reduction or grant to seniors in this province.

Educational property tax relief would be available to both senior homeowners and senior tenants and would be implemented in two stages. It's important to understand that both people who rent or lease and people who own their homes would be eligible for this grant. It's important to understand that.

In 2003, seniors who own or rent their homes would be eligible for a credit that would reimburse the education portion of the residential property tax they pay on their principal residence for the period after July 1, 2003—that's coming up in about 28 days. From July 1 on, seniors will not have to pay the education portion of their residential tax. That's a good thing.

I can't see how anyone would want to vote against that. I think we could probably pass this bill tonight, with the opposition's agreement.

Oh dear, I'm seeing some heads shaking the wrong way. We have a little gloomy face on there. I'll bet we

could change that to a happy face if we passed this bill tonight.

No, I'm still getting the little sad shakes. They're moving in the wrong direction.

It's a good thing that on this side of the House we have a majority. That means the seniors in this province will be protected and looked after.

In 2003, they're going to get six months of tax relief, but starting in 2004, their relief would be based on a full year's residential property tax paid.

Mr Mazzilli: That's important. They call me every day just to ask, "When does it start?"

Mr Chudleigh: It starts on July 1. This year they'll get a six-month credit, and in 2004, starting January 1—and January 1 is when 2004 will start—

Laughter.

Mr Chudleigh: This is an easy crowd to please, don't you think?

Starting in 2004—

Interjections.

Mr Chudleigh: I hope Hansard is getting down all this heckling, because I want to get even tomorrow.

Starting in 2004, seniors will get a full tax credit for the entire year.

When this bill is passed, this new tax relief for seniors program will provide \$450 million—

Mr Beaubien: How much?

Mr Chudleigh: —\$450 million in tax relief for seniors.

Mr Mazzilli: That's got to be the single largest tax decrease ever.

Mr Chudleigh: It's the single largest tax decrease dedicated to seniors ever passed in this province. The Liberals say they'll repeal it. The Liberals are against tax cuts. The Liberals know they can spend money better than you can. The Liberals are opposed to tax cuts. They're going to cancel half the tax cuts we've made in the last eight years.

If you want to pay higher taxes, if you want to have fewer jobs, vote for the Liberals. It's a proven fact. If you want more jobs, if you want lower taxes, vote for the Conservatives. It's as simple as that. It's going to be a very simple election when it's called next fall.

Hon Mr Clark: Correct the record: "if you want more tax cuts."

Mr Chudleigh: Didn't I say that?

Hon Mr Clark: No.

Mr Chudleigh: Apparently I didn't say, "if you want more tax cuts." Hansard will look after that; they're very good down there.

On an individual basis, that would mean an average net annual saving of \$475 for each of almost one million seniors in this province. It's a winner.

This new tax relief for seniors is an enhancement of Ontario's personal income tax system, which already provides a variety of tax cuts that recognize that senior citizens have lower average incomes than the population as a whole. That's grossly unfair. These people have given more throughout their lifetime and yet they have

lower average incomes than the population as a whole. These include Ontario's age credit and Ontario property and sales tax credits, which provide support to seniors and their families.

Seniors have also benefited from Ontario's broad-based tax cuts that we've made to date. In our first tenure, from 1995 to 1999, we cut personal tax rates. How much did we cut them? We cut that tax rate by 30%. That, in and of itself, was the largest tax cut Canadians have ever received from any provincial government or any federal government—30%.

What have we done in our second term, the term we're in now, from 1999 to today? We cut taxes again. We cut the tax rate of this province 20% in our second term. That would be the second-largest tax cut.

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre): Did revenues go down?

Mr Chudleigh: Did revenues go down, my colleague asks? No, they didn't. It's the same concept as when you want your sales to go up in a retail operation: you put on a sale. You reduce your prices and you get more revenue. The same thing happens with tax cuts. You reduce taxes, there's more economic activity and people pay more taxes.

We created 1.1 million new jobs. Do you know what else happened? When we created 1.1 million new jobs, we had 1.1 million new taxpayers. Tax revenues went up. It's a simple concept. Apparently it's lost on the folks across the way. And in Ottawa, it isn't a concept they even talk about. It's a shame. This country could be the economic fire engine of the entire world if Ottawa would only look at Ontario's experience.

Furthermore, the budget also announces new benefits that would help infirm seniors and their family caregivers. How many among us look after their parents? We go over on a Saturday and maybe cut some grass. But there comes a time when your parents need more care than that, when they have to be looked after almost on a daily basis. The people who do that are saints in this world. They earn their angel's wings while here on earth, looking after our seniors, who are so important, who have done so much for this province and this country.

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To recognize that caregiving is the least we can do. So giving caregivers a tax cut and improvements to the non-refundable credit, supporting individuals with disabilities and family caregivers, will become effective as of January 1, 2003. That is last January. It will be retroactive. These enhancements would provide annual benefits of about \$50 million to about 165,000 family caregivers and people with disabilities.

There are people in my community, people who are spread throughout our communities, in Acton, Drumquin, Omagh, Milton, Georgetown, Oakville and Burlington, in the major centres and in the smallest towns of Morrisburg and Mohawk and those areas of our communities that are very small, in every one of those, who are caring for seniors, whether they be their mothers or fathers or whether they be their children who have unfortunately

been afflicted with something that requires parental care throughout a lifetime. So it's important that we recognize that care and that giving.

It is vital for seniors that the members of this Legislature pass this bill. Its passage would demonstrate to them that all parties agree that their past contributions deserve the recognition of the people of this Legislature and the people of this province.

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): They have paid their dues.

Mr Chudleigh: Seniors have paid their dues and they deserve nothing less than that recognition.

It would also demonstrate that the members of the Legislature support seniors' right to a safe and secure lifestyle. The Ontario government believes strongly in making sure that seniors have the best quality of life in safe and healthy communities. I think we have spent money and made commitments in those areas to back up those words.

Our commitment to supporting seniors involves many ministries throughout the government. Through the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, our government has increased health care funding from \$17.6 billion in 1995 to over \$27.6 billion this year—\$10 billion. Regardless of the fact that in 1997 the federal government took out \$2 billion, we made that up, plus another \$8 billion. We have spent \$10 billion. The only cuts to health care that have happened in Ontario have been from the federal government, a federal government that is peopled with a whole bunch of Liberals. This is an increase of \$10 billion since we came to office.

In 1998, our government committed to increasing its annual spending on long-term care by \$1.2 billion from 1998 to 2005. As the minister mentioned, it was during that period of time that the first commitment to long-term-care beds was made in this province in over 10 years. That would include the lost decade we had when the Liberals and NDP unfortunately were elected to office in this province. No new long-term-care beds were built during that lost decade of 10 years.

Hon Mr Clark: How long was that?

Mr Chudleigh: To the member from Stoney Point, a decade is usually 10 years.

Hon Mr Clark: Stoney Creek.

Mr Chudleigh: Stoney Point, Stoney Creek; it's close.

This plan to invest \$1.2 billion includes approximately \$700 million to fund the construction and operation costs of the 20,000 new long-term-care beds that I was talking about. It also includes \$55 million in increased annual spending on vital long-term-care community services such as visiting nurses, homemakers, Meals on Wheels and transportation services, the kinds of services that seniors need in order to stay in the home they have lived in for so many years, the home they are comfortable in, the home that their grandchildren come to visit them in. That's where they are happiest, that's where they need to be, and we as a government have to provide them with the funds and the opportunity to stay in that location for

as long as their health and vitality will allow them to. Funding new long-term-care beds is only part of our plan to provide residents in all long-term facilities with additional nursing and personal care.

To keep our seniors safe and secure, the province is also maintaining its support of communities. We are supporting our police and other public safety workers who risk their lives to protect us. In 1997 the government invested more than \$150 million in a wide range of initiatives designed to create a safer and more secure Ontario for our families and, in particular, our seniors. The community policing partnership program has put over 1,000 new police officers on the streets of Ontario. Forty-three of them, I might add, were put on the streets of Halton, something I'm very proud of. Special squads were established to combat organized crime. The community emergency response volunteers program is designed to become a vital component of the province's overall emergency and disaster management strategy. The program is encouraging retired public safety, security and health professionals to join so that seniors can continue to contribute to the communities that they live in, doing what they've been trained to do throughout a lifetime.

Much of what we enjoy today is a result of the hard work and sacrifice of Ontario's seniors. They deserve our appreciation through the bill we are debating today, as well as the many initiatives proposed in this budget. Again, I urge all members of this House to show their gratitude to our seniors by granting Bill 43 a speedy passage—a passage that we could do tonight. We can actually pass this bill tonight, but as I look across the floor, I'm seeing little sad heads shaking in the wrong way. I know that Santa Claus will be making a note.

The Acting Speaker: I think I can safely say, on behalf of all members in the House, thank you.

Questions and comments?

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): There's no one in this Legislature who wouldn't like to lower taxes. However, the reality is, and they know it, we cannot afford it. Let's look at what you've done to the seniors in your time here. We have seniors having to literally leave their homes because of the lack of home care. You've frozen the budgets. You've cut home care for seniors right across this province to the point where they can't stay in their own house. People with disabilities, and that includes—

Interjection.

Mr Parsons: Oh, don't blame the federal government. You've been here eight years. Have the guts to take a little responsibility for what you've done to seniors over the years. Quinte Healthcare is laying off nurses thanks to you people. While you want credit for health care, seniors who need the most health care are not getting it.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: All right, all right. Everybody just calm down.

Please continue.

Mr Parsons: They started it.

Seniors in this province cannot get a doctor. In my community, approximately 20,000 people cannot get a family doctor, an item of utmost concern to seniors, and there's absolutely nothing being done to help.

Cancer care: two thirds of the patients in Ontario identified with cancer cannot get treatment within the eight weeks recommended by your government. You set a goal that 33% at one stage should get care, but still two thirds are not getting care.

Affordable housing doesn't exist. This, as always, is not a level tax cut. It benefits the well-to-do; it does not benefit the average person. In fact, the average senior will need to take this money to pay. When we look at the cuts, Ted Rogers will save \$18,425 a year, more than the income for most seniors. Isabel Bassett will save \$7,035 a year—far, far more than the average senior.

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Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): I thought Christmas was coming a little early, I heard so many references to Santa Claus. I think there must be some of Santa's happy little elves over there, busily building those toys that are going to get them elected.

It was quite an emotive argument. I heard all of the right buzzwords, and all of these things are true: we owe a great debt of gratitude to seniors; we owe a great debt of gratitude to those who fought in the Second World War and in Korea as well. These things are emotive and, sure, they're true. We all of course had parents, and some of us are lucky enough to still have parents, and we owe them gratitude as well. But the whole thing comes down to who can best use the money.

If you get the money or you get refunds simply because of your age, what is to stop someone from saying that children should get decreases, or that somebody who is 20 years old should get decreases, or somebody who is 30 or 40 or 50—you pick the age—because you have isolated a group and said that they should get money based on age, nothing else—age, not need? I would be the first to stand here and tell you that many people who are seniors are poor, and if you were about to say, "Let's give money to poor seniors," I would stand up to vote for your bill right now. But you're giving money to people who do not need it simply because they are older. With respect, one has to have a great deal of difficulty with such an argument. It is simply buying votes from the elderly.

Hon Mr Clark: Shame.

Mr Prue: Yes, you should be ashamed. You should absolutely be ashamed.

We need to get money to the disabled, to the poor, to those on welfare and to poor children. When you've looked after them, I think the seniors can be there too.

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: I'd like to respond to my colleague the member from Halton. He started his comments by referring to June 6 and Juno Beach. I had the pleasure and honour to be with the Premier this morning, along with Minister Runciman and Minister Hardeman, with an announcement about this memorial for our fallen war heroes here at Queen's Park. This reminded me of why we're doing this particular bill.

We did of course confirm the \$1 million committed to the Juno Beach project. We were joined today by Garth Webb, who is the president of the Juno Beach association, along with many other veterans, including a good friend of mine, Margaret Ackroyd, an entertainer during the war who has a huge commitment to Juno Beach. Major General Richard Rohmer has agreed to chair the project for our memorial. Major General Rohmer was telling me of his front seat to the action on Juno Beach on D-Day. He happened to be in a Mustang about 500 feet from the beach and he was there, just in case the Luftwaffe came in, to protect our troops. He said he could see our heroic Canadian troops engaging in D-Day.

That's why we should be doing things for seniors; that's why all of us believe that seniors are important to our communities. I can go on and on about the number of people—in fact, just earlier this year I was able to help present Queen's Golden Jubilee medals to some of the seniors and veterans in my own community, people like Margaret Ackroyd, whom I mentioned, or Wayne Baker, who was a paratrooper. We had a huge contribution from our seniors. It's time that we recognized how important they are to all of us. I believe we all agree that seniors are important to all of us, but this is just a small part of what they do.

As the member from Halton indicated, after they had their commitment in terms of World War II and the Korean War, they came back to Canada to construct and build our nation. These are the people we need to be thankful to and to respect and honour. That's why I support this bill today.

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): Je dois dire que je suis pleinement d'accord avec mon collègue de Prince Edward-Hastings lorsqu'il dit que ce gouvernement se vante toujours de réduire les impôts, et lorsqu'on dit qu'on réduit les impôts, presque à chaque fois, nous allons procéder à du délestage, du down-loading, qu'on est porté à dire, soit aux municipalités, ou dire maintenant aux personnes âgées, « Vos visites que vous avez chez vous une fois par semaine, maintenant elles vont être réduites à une fois par deux semaines. » Est-ce que nous allons procéder aussi avec une augmentation du coût lorsque nous allons chercher nos médicaments? Actuellement, dépendamment du revenu, c'est 2 \$ ou 6 \$. Encore là, le gouvernement doit aller chercher ces 450 \$ millions-là quelque part.

Lorsque je regarde le déficit, ou la dette accumulée, que ce gouvernement-là a créé depuis son entrée au pouvoir en 1995, le gouvernement conservateur a augmenté notre dette de 21 \$ milliards. Aujourd'hui je vois dans une découpe de journal du vendredi dernier que l'on est revenu sur notre décision. Mais la chose la plus importante avec ce projet de loi-là : où est la réglementation?

Nous savons, lorsque nous regardons le projet qui avait été déposé sur la gestion des éléments nutritifs—la réglementation n'est pas sortie—que nous avons reçu des pressions. Puis, tous les gens s'attendent d'avoir un rabais, et ce n'est pas un rabais; c'est un crédit d'impôt.

Lorsque c'est un crédit d'impôt, depuis que l'annonce était faite lors du lancement du budget à l'entrepôt de pièces d'auto Magna, les gens nous ont appelé et ils ont dit, « Quand est-ce qu'on va recevoir notre chèque? » Aujourd'hui je n'aurai pas peur de leur dire, « Vous n'aurez aucun chèque. Vous allez avoir un crédit d'impôt si vous payez déjà des impôts. »

The Acting Speaker: The member for Halton now has two minutes to respond.

Mr Chudleigh: I thank the member for Prince Edward-Hastings for his comments, as well as the member for Beaches-East York, who mentioned that he does respect the seniors' contributions to Ontario and he thanks them for their contributions to Ontario. That is halfway there. I think it will be easy for this member to vote for this bill in thanking those seniors and recognizing their contributions. But he talks about who else might need this money. That is the great challenge of government, to see where you spend your money. You mentioned children. Well, our Early Years program for children: the Chair of Management Board could tell us how much money we're spending on Early Years for children. It's millions of dollars. It is a leading program across North America, as is our program for children under six years of age for autism, a leading program across North America in identifying as early as two years old autistic children and working with them so that they can become productive members of our society, if we can find these children prior—

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: One hundred and fifty-two million.

Mr Chudleigh: It's \$152 million. So, yes, we are spending money in those areas. But we're also spending money with seniors. Given the contribution to our society that seniors have made, I think they deserve it. The member for Markham, the Chair of Management Board, pointed out on my comments on the Juno monument—I'm not sure I mentioned it—that that monument was constructed in my riding of Halton. I'm very pleased and honoured that it was created there, as it sits on that beach and looks out over the English Channel. It will be there for eternity and it came from the great riding of Halton.

The Acting Speaker: The floor is now open for further debate.

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): First I would like unanimous consent to stand down our lead speech on this matter. Then we would be able to go into normal rotation of 20-minute speeches.

The Acting Speaker: You've heard the request. Is it agreed? I heard no noes, so it is approved. I think that works. You now have the floor for 20 minutes.

Mr Brown: I am delighted, I think, to be here to be able to speak to this particular piece of legislation this evening. I think all of us understand the great contributions of seniors to this province and indeed to this nation. That is not a question. The question is, how would we recognize that? What the government is proposing here is probably the most cumbersome, ill-advised way anyone could think of in recognizing the efforts of senior citizens in Ontario.

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I don't think the Minister of Finance has actually read this bill; her remarks didn't seem to reflect that. This bill appears to provide a tax credit for seniors on the basis of their education tax; what education tax they're purported to be paying. Well, I did a little looking in my own constituency regarding how much that would be. I looked at municipalities like Assiginack, Blind River, central Manitoulin, Chapleau, Dubreuilville, Elliot Lake, Espanola, Gore Bay, Hilton Beach, Huron Shores, Manitouwadge, Michipicoten, northeastern Manitoulin and the islands and others. About \$300 is the average amount an average household would pay in education property tax in those municipalities. I'm told by legislative research that around \$300 is the amount that would be paid in northeastern Ontario in general.

Where the number that the government seems to float of \$475 comes from is beyond me, because it certainly doesn't reflect whatsoever the numbers that I see in my constituency. To suggest that each senior is Algoma-Manitoulin would receive \$475 doesn't even take into account that in most households there are two seniors, not one. So if you do the numbers in the constituency, at best \$10 to \$15 each is the amount of money we're talking about.

What do you weigh that against? You weigh that against the fact that 115,000 people, mostly seniors, have been cut off home care in the last year; 115,000 people who needed home care to stay in their own homes have been cut off by this government in the last year. On Manitoulin Island we have lost the only home care office we ever had; it doesn't exist. It is now administered from Espanola. In the Elliot Lake area, I have people in my office tell me that they weren't going to be able to exist without the support that home care provided, and they can't.

Now, the cost of providing home care that is needed in the communities in Ontario, according to the community care access centres themselves, is approximately \$100 million. This measure is to cost \$475 million. It's a question of value. If you think that the people with low income who are frail and have difficulty staying in their own home or apartment will benefit from this measure and not from a measure that will provide the funding to home care, then you should vote for this. If you believe, however, that the 115,000 people this government cut off last year would be better off with home care being provided to them, you should not vote for this. That's pretty much as clear as it gets.

If you want to bring our nursing homes and homes for the aged, the number of nursing hours, the amount of care they receive in their facilities up to the level of Saskatchewan, I believe the cost for that is in the \$300-million to \$400-million range.

If you did those two things, you could not afford the \$475 million you're earmarking for this program. That's the choice you're asking us to make here in the Legislature: either you fund long-term-care facilities and home care or you provide a broad-based tax credit that has

absolutely nothing to do with your total income or the total value of your property. I find this is an easy choice for most people. Most people would say that we have an obligation to look after those in society who have the least ability to look after themselves. They don't think that Ted Rogers deserves \$18,425 as a property tax credit. They don't believe that Ken Thomson needs to get \$17,755 a year or that Peter Munk deserves \$17,755 or Hal Jackman a little more than \$12,000 or Isabel Bassett a little more than \$7,000.

The average senior citizen living in the average household in Algoma-Manitoulin will receive less than \$300, and they will not have home care available to them the way they should, and they will not have care for their loved ones or for themselves in nursing homes.

This is the same government that this very year is increasing the fees to all people in long-term care. My math might not be totally accurate to the dime, but it is in the neighbourhood of \$700 a resident this year—a \$700 increase for each and every resident in a long-term-care facility, or if you're an average person on old age pension and receiving some small pensions from other places, you may receive about \$300 maximum. That's the choice you're asked to make.

You say, on your side, that what we should have is a seniors' tax credit—by the way, it's not really a tax credit; it's a tax grant. You have to apply for this; there's nothing automatic. This is the most cumbersome administrative bill you could possibly have conceived, because you have to apply. You would have to apply and, guess what, Premier Ernie is going to bring you the cheque. He's going to be able to say, "I brought you the cheque. Here's your cheque." This year, he'll bring you a cheque for maybe \$150 if you apply.

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): If you apply.

Mr Brown: If you apply.

We do have a tax credit system for seniors already in place. It provides quite generous seniors' tax credits to those people who have incomes of \$22,000 or less and then diminishes up to about \$40,000, if my memory serves, as it kind of graduates out. If you really wanted to do something along the tax credit line, you would put more money into that program, change the floor of that and maybe increase it to \$30,000 or \$35,000—totally eliminate property taxes for a lot of people. That would be a huge assistance and, do you know what, it's easily administered through the income tax system and wouldn't cost you a dime to administer because the present one already exists.

This is just plain bad policy, but it might be good politics, because that's what this bill is really about. This bill isn't about good policy for seniors. It isn't about making sure seniors can stay in their homes. It isn't about thanking seniors for all their many contributions to our society over the years. It isn't about any of that. It is about a government that has been watching the polls way too closely. It's a government that has looked at the Compass polling. Remember how two or three weeks ago

we saw: "This is what we need to win the election"? "We need a few more votes here. Well, if we spend \$475 million on senior citizens, we can buy enough votes to get us three or four."

Some genius in the backroom is figuring out how many seats that'll get you. And that's where some of this other great stuff comes from—the mortgage deductibility—

Mr Bisson: It's not me. You said, "In the backroom." It's not me.

Mr Brown: I wasn't thinking it was you.

The rest of these so-called tax measures have nothing to do with good public policy. They have to do with trying to move your polling numbers.

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I was talking to people across the province. I was fortunate enough to be picked up on some newscasts. What I suggested was if a pollster calls you—and I'm going to suggest that again today—under no circumstance answer anything other than, "I am going to vote Conservative." We need those polls to move. We need the Conservative Party to improve in their popularity in this province, and then we could have this election. If we could have this election, we wouldn't have bad public policy that is being dressed up and masqueraded as—all it's about is trying to buy votes with people's own money.

This is the government. My friends would know this. Talk about Standard and Poors: Standard and Poors says you've got a gap in your budget—

Ms Di Cocco: Two billion.

Mr Brown: No, I think Standard and Poors is only about \$1.6 billion. If you look at the Dominion Bond Rating Service, they say that \$2.2 billion out of that—

Mr Wettlaufer: Did they cut our credit rating?

Mr Brown: The member from Kitchener Centre wants to know if they cut their bond rating. No, that will happen after your next budget, if you're still here.

Mr Wettlaufer: No, no, no.

Mr Brown: You still do not have the bond rating that we had in this province in 1990, so I wouldn't be too excited about that over there.

The Dominion Bond Rating Service tells us—now, they're a very political group. They really care about who's running government. They couldn't care less. What they care about is whether governments can pay their bills. The Dominion Bond Rating Service says you're \$2.2 billion in debt this year. You were \$700 million from last year, under the way they account for things. Frankly, that's the way it should be accounted for. They don't care about Liberals, Conservatives, New Democrats, Rhinos—whatever. What they care about is the fiscal position of the province of Ontario.

Mr Wettlaufer: And you guys demonstrated in five years that you really knew a lot about fiscal positions.

Mr Brown: Yes, and that's why the Peterson government had the highest rating you could have.

Mr Wettlaufer: No.

Mr Brown: Yes. That happens to be the truth. But, nevertheless, that's ancient history. What we're talking about is now, and what we're talking about is a seniors' tax credit.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order.

Mr Brown: I think I've been teasing the bears, Mr Speaker.

This bill does not prescribe how this is to happen. All of this happens by regulation, by the way. There is no cap to the amount of money that can go to a particular senior. It doesn't speak to, in any way that I can find, the situation where one person may be a senior and one may not in a household. How does that work? I don't know. Both names would probably be on the deed, in most situations. A married couple: what happens? It doesn't say. It doesn't say what the percentages really are. It implies that the tax reduction will be somewhat similar to the education property tax—which, by the way, I think most Ontarians don't know they're paying, because they were told in 1995 that you were getting rid of all that residential property tax for education. They thought you'd already done it. I guess that didn't happen. It's fair enough that the rest of us do pay that.

You must file this application "within two years after the end of the year to which the tax credit relates or within such longer period as may be prescribed by regulation." Again, you have to be proactive. You have to file with the province of Ontario a request, on a form yet to be determined, to a bureaucracy yet to be created, to send out a cheque for an amount yet to be determined—on what basis? The act itself does not say so.

I would suggest to you that this is bad public policy. It does not do what the government purports it to do. It purports it to be supporting seniors when in fact nothing could be further from the truth. It is a relatively small amount of money for the average senior, and with huge administrative costs, it means that important programs that seniors rely on will not be funded. It means that home care for 115,000, mostly seniors, will not be restored. It means that we will not have the increases in funding to our long-term-care facilities that would bring them up to levels approaching that of the province of Saskatchewan. It means that we do not get three baths a week in nursing homes, as was formerly the case; we'll be lucky to get one. It means that the former requirement of 2.25 hours per day in nursing homes for nursing services will not occur. That's what this means.

This is a cheap, shallow ploy to get seniors' votes, and seniors are not going to buy into it. As a matter of fact, CARP, one of the organizations that represents seniors in this province, says exactly what I have just said. If the other members believe that seniors should have large cuts to programming, large cuts to health care, and should pay for prescriptions, as this government introduced—that's what CARP says. CARP says that this is a foolish program. This is a program that does not work; it won't achieve what the government wants it to.

I think that perhaps we should reflect a little bit on what seniors have told me. I was at a number of events in

my constituency over the weekend. Not one of them came up to me and said, "I'm looking forward to seniors' tax credits." Not one.

Mr Bisson: They're saying, "Call the election."

Mr Brown: Actually, you're right. They were saying, "When are they calling the election?"

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): They know you're against it. Why would they tell you that?

Mr Brown: Maybe they might want to change my mind, Minister.

They talked to me about home care. They talked to me about long-term care. They talked to me about services that are no longer available that were once available to them. They talked to me about their hopes for their children and grandchildren. They talked about educating those children. They're wondering why a government would not want money available to educate young people. They're wondering about the double cohort, because many of them have grandchildren who are going off to college or university. They're wondering about class size. They're wondering about whether there's residence available. They're wondering about how young people are going to be able to afford to buy their first home. They're wondering about whether there will be opportunities like there were for them in this society in the last century.

They have a lot of questions, but the last thing they're worried about is whether they are going to be able to qualify for some kind of half-baked property tax credit, which goes proportionately to the more wealthy seniors and disproportionately to the ones who need it, when we already have a program that could be easily enhanced, if that's what you want to do, to provide strong support for seniors in the lower- and mid-income groups in our society. This is simply a way to attempt to buy votes and it simply will not work.

Applause.

Mr Wettlaufer: Not a lot of applause over there.

Mr Brown: I know.

The Acting Speaker: Members now have up to two minutes for questions or comments.

2020

Mr Bisson: The member from Algoma-Manitoulin raises what is central to this debate, and that is, how much of this is actually policy and how much of this is actually politics? That's really the point that he raises. It's an interesting point for debate, because if the stated policy of the government, the objective, was, "We want to find a way to put more money in the pockets of seniors," there's a whole bunch of other ways you can do this that would be a lot simpler. For example, you can change the Income Tax Act. This government has changed income tax rules in Ontario a number of times, where they've reduced taxes. That's something they want to take some credit for, and we understand that. Why didn't they say, "If we're going to make this universal, why not do an income tax reduction to all those people above age 65?" or whatever the criteria might be? At

least in that way, there would be some universality to what they're doing. So I say to myself, if it's not a stated policy of where they're going, then it's got to be about politics. It's a really sexy thing to be able to say to seniors and the general population out there, "There's an election around the corner. We're trying to find a couple of issues that we think might be popular with the public, so we're going to allow people to deduct the income tax portion charged to their property tax bill." Quite frankly, I think the member got it right: this is more about politics and has very much less to do with the actual policy. I'll have an opportunity a little bit later to speak about that in some detail, but I think it's a point worth making.

The other thing in regard to how you administer this is that it seems to me we're creating—and for a government who says they don't believe in creating bureaucracies, you're creating a heck of a bureaucracy by way of this program. It would have been a lot simpler to do a change on the income tax form than to have a process where people have to apply for a rebate. I'll speak to that a little bit later as well.

Hon Mr Newman: I want to comment on the member for Algoma-Manitoulin and his remarks this evening regarding the seniors' property tax credit. I think he failed to mention that this proposed property tax credit would affect not just homeowners but tenants as well, and that's a good thing. It's a way of putting additional dollars into the pockets of seniors, allowing them to keep more of what they earned in the first place.

He also talked about having broader tax cuts across all sectors of the economy with respect to seniors. I can tell you that there are literally thousands of seniors in Ontario who no longer pay any provincial income tax because of the tax cuts of this government over the past eight years and, I might remind everyone, tax cuts he voted against each and every time in this House. There are literally thousands across the province who are no longer paying personal income tax in Ontario but continue to be charged income tax by the federal government. I think the federal government should start reducing taxes for seniors on a large scale across the province.

The government does take seniors in this province very seriously, and seniors' issues in particular. I can tell you that's why we embarked upon a very ambitious plan to build 20,000 new long-term-care beds across the province—some of them in his own community—as well as to rebuild some 16,000 beds in the older facilities across the province that didn't meet the new design standards. That's part of our \$1.2-billion initiative to improve long-term-care services in this province. I thought he might want to talk about that.

I thought he might also have touched on the subject of long-term care and the increase in funding for nursing and personal care that took effect last August 1 in this province—100 million additional dollars being put into the system for nursing and personal care. He shakes his head no. I just say to the member opposite, don't confuse that \$100 million with the \$100 million we announced on Thursday for long-term-care facilities. That's \$200 mil-

lion for long-term care just in the last 10 months, 200 million additional dollars of long-term-care money going to our seniors in Ontario.

Ms Di Cocco: I have to say that the member for Algoma-Manitoulin gave a clear and factual view of what this bill actually is. This is about a grant that has to be applied for. There are more questions from this bill than there are answers. After going through it, I believe it really is poor public policy and is more about a political gimmick, if you want. That's what it is: to buy votes. That's what this bill really is all about. The \$600 extra that is being charged to all of the seniors in long-term care, the 15% that was put into place, I guess, last summer, and now they are going to divvy it up over the next three years. But it's \$600 extra every year.

Here we have a ploy by the government, again. It's basically to buy votes. It's not about enhancing the welfare and the well-being of seniors in this province, yes, who have contributed a great deal.

I spoke to a senior the other day. She is in her 70s and is looking after a very elderly mother. Do you know the hospital called her and asked if she would go to the X-ray with her mother because they only had one person on staff and she needed to be held up? She said, "I don't know what this province is coming to, but we had better care a number of years ago than we do now."

So that's what really is at stake.

The Acting Speaker: One last question or comment?

Mr Prue: I listened to what the member from Algoma-Manitoulin had to say, and I'd like to comment, really, on his research. He gave examples about seniors. He gave good examples about seniors who are in poverty, and he gave examples of the minority of seniors who are very rich.

We like to think of seniors—or perhaps many politicians who speak about seniors—as a monolithic group: poor people living alone, people living in destitution or poverty, people who have paid their debts. You have this sort of visual image of what seniors are.

But I would suggest the member has hit that nail on the head, because seniors are as diverse a group as any other group in society. There are those who have come from wealthy backgrounds and have maintained wealth throughout their lives. There are those who have been wealthy but have suddenly found themselves poor in old age. There are those who have been poor all their lives. So I think that to speak of seniors as one group is a way of doing disservice to them.

What we need to do and what this government needs to do is to say that all seniors are not the same, just as all people are not the same, and we need to look at a way of funding those who need it most.

I was up earlier, and I talked about people who need it the most. Surely the thousands or tens of thousands of children in this city who live in poverty need our attention. Certainly seniors who live in poverty and who cannot afford the rent and who are starting to lose their housing need our help. Surely those people who are on disability allowance and who get \$930 a month and

haven't seen it raised for seven or eight years need our help. That's where the focus here should be going.

As the member said, I don't think the Peter Munks of this world need the money quite as much as those who are living in poverty. I commend him for what he had to say.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Algoma-Manitoulin now has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr Brown: I'd like to thank the member for Timmins-James Bay, the Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, the member for Sarnia-Lambton and the member for Beaches-East York for their comments.

I would just like to tell the House that there are senior citizens in Wawa or Bruce Mines or on St Joseph Island who have seen absolutely huge increases in their electricity bill—or the seniors anywhere, perhaps on Manitoulin Island or in the smaller communities like Gore Bay or Manitowaning or Sheguiandah, who are going to see absolutely incredible increases in the price of having water delivered to their homes. Even in my home community in Billings, we are looking at astronomical increases in the cost of providing clean water to our homes through the municipal systems.

We've seen tremendous increases in many places in natural gas—retroactive costs in natural gas being assessed—under this government.

Clearly, many of our seniors need additional money. That isn't the question. The question really is, why would any government choose a cumbersome program like the one they're providing here? I don't have the numbers, so maybe the next government speaker will want to stand up and say, "You know what? Some 90% of this money goes to people whose incomes are less than \$20,000." I don't think that's the case and I don't think they'll say it, because it's probably exactly the opposite.

This is an ill-conceived, vote-buying program.

2030

The Acting Speaker: It is now time for the leadoff speech for the third party.

Mr Bisson: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I'm so glad you are in the chair tonight because I get an opportunity to do what otherwise would be your lead. I know you're really sad that you're not able to be over here to do it. I can see you from here.

The good thing about this is that it's a tax measure. That means to say the subject matter gets a little bit wider as we get into these particular bills. First of all, let me deal with the bill and then relate to that some of the choices I think the government could make to affect seniors in a positive way in Ontario.

This is about choice. It's about saying that a government has different mechanisms at its disposal to try to find a way to make life more bearable for people in different classes of our society. Clearly, government could choose to do a number of things to assist seniors, and I'll talk about that a little bit later. We could invest in our health care system. We could invest in our long-term-care system. We could invest in public housing. We

could invest in policing, to make sure that our communities are safe. We could invest in transit. There are a number of ways that government can invest to really make a positive impact on people's lives.

Instead, this government has made an interesting choice. If you ask seniors the straight-up question, "Do you think what the government's offering is something you would like?" probably most seniors would say yes. After all, who doesn't like a few extra bucks in their pocket at the end of the year? So from a straight-up, straight-down question, it's not a bad thing for a senior listening to what the government has to say about this, but you have to ask yourself the question, what other choices could the government have made? That's really what I want to focus on, because I think this government is saying reams about itself and about where it finds itself politically when it comes to this particular choice they've made.

First of all, I believe the choice was made for political reasons. This is not a policy issue. I can't believe for a minute that the government has made this particular decision as a policy decision in order to advance something for seniors. This is politics, pure and simple. The government has decided, by looking at the polls, that they're vulnerable. They were hoping they would be somewhere in the high 30s or low 40s this spring so they would be in a position to call an election.

The government has made a choice. As they looked at the polls, they wished to be in the high 30s or low 40s. They wished to be in a position this spring, at the end of the fourth year of their mandate, to call a provincial election. Fortunately for us and unfortunately for the Tories—and by us, I mean the public; I don't mean just us New Democrats; I'm talking about the public in general—they are not anywhere near the kind of numbers they want to call an election.

As they looked at the polling numbers, at one point they were at 32%, then they dropped down to about 28%, and they said, "What do we have to do to bring the numbers back up again?" So they went to the polls and they tried to look at what some of the hot-button issues are. We know Mike Harris was very good at figuring out the hot-button issues in 1995 when they were swept to power. They said, "We've got to do something for seniors, because, after all, who can say anything against seniors?" They decided they needed to find some hot-button issues to try to garner votes, not only from seniors but their families and people in general in our society who do care—and I think rightfully so—about how seniors are being treated.

After all, there's an old saying that says a society is best measured by the way it reflects those people within its society who are least able to defend themselves, and by and large, those are kids and elderly people, or older seniors. I wouldn't say newer ones. Most of them are probably in better shape than I am. You should see some of these guys. There's a gentleman, Mr Ciccione, 85 or 86 years old, who every day rides his bike from South Porcupine to Schumacher. I'll tell you, there are some

seniors out there who are in far better shape than some people half their age. So let's not pity them too much, because we have a lot of seniors out there who are in pretty good shape. I'd have a hard time trying to ride that bike the same distance, and I'm half the age of 85—well, almost.

The point I make is that the government decided to do this because they saw this as a carrot to offer in the upcoming election. They hoped that by announcing this measure, both in the throne speech and later by way of unrolling their platform as they did at the end of May, it would give them the bump they needed to go out to the polls. On the way to the polls, do you know what they found? They're not getting the bump they looked for.

You've got to say to yourself that the public, by and large, gets it. The only ones who are not really getting it are the government and the public, I think, for a couple of reasons—because they're tired of this government. When you look at the latest polls that have come out, over half the people in Ontario are saying they want a change. That indicates to me that people are tired of what the government's been doing and most people in their own way, not understanding all the details—because far too often people don't understand the details about what's happening at Queen's Park. But people in general, as they looked at this particular measure, said, "It's not enough of a vote-getter for me to switch my vote." I think most people understand this for what it is. It's about politics and less about substance.

Why is the government—this is really the key issue—today, prior to the next general election, introducing this bill for passage? I think they understand, as the polls indicated, that there's nobody out in the public who really believes the government would actually deliver on this, should they promise it going into the next election. That's why they've put this in now. They're saying, "Here's something we can put in. We can have it introduced in the Legislature and have the full debate." I haven't read the bill, but it'll be interesting to know—is this bill proclaimed by automatic date or is it by cabinet? I'm just looking for the clerks to send me up a note if this bill is proclaimed by date or by cabinet. It'll be interesting to know what happens with this particular bill.

What's interesting is that the government introduced this bill wanting to pass it because then they've got the issue going into the election, saying, "It's not something we're promising you; it's something we've done. Look who voted against it. It's those guys." In his all-candidates meeting Dan Newman stands and says, "How can you vote for that Liberal candidate? How can you vote for that NDP candidate? They voted against seniors." It's all about politics.

It's like me in the upcoming provincial election. As you guys go off with your banning the right to strike for teachers, I'll be there with my two colleagues who are running, both the Liberal and Conservative, and I'll be saying, "Remember Dalton McGuinty. Look at his bill. He's in favour of banning the right to strike to workers." It's politics. OK, fine, but let's be clear about what this is

all about. This is about trying to find a wedge issue for the Conservatives to position themselves for the next election. That's why I say it has little to do with policy and more to do with politics.

What kind of choices could the government have made? Before I go there, you have to ask yourself the second question from a policy perspective: who's going to benefit from this? By and large it's property owners with pretty big pieces of property. If I happen to be a property owner or an apartment dweller who lives in a place that's worth \$80,000 or \$120,000, I'm going to get far less than, let's say, somebody who has a building that's worth \$1 million or \$6 million, if it's an estate. From the perspective of policy, you would think that where you give the most help is to the people who need it the most. You would think that's the way we do it. Do we need to help a senior who has a \$1-million property more than we help a senior who's living in an apartment in a subsidized unit somewhere in Ontario? I think it's a fair policy question.

I'm going to get the answer to my question. I love the clerks of the Legislature. They're always on the ball. Somebody walked into the House. Thank you. I got the answer to my question. I'll come back to that in a minute.

As I say, basically it's interesting from a policy perspective who it is the government's trying to help. I would think as legislators, if we're going to direct any kind of money toward rebate on taxes or by way of programs, we want to help those people who need it the most. I would say, like my good friend Mr Prue from Beaches-East York did a couple of minutes ago, if we're trying to direct dollars, is it the \$1-million property owner who needs it most or is it the senior on a fixed income who lives in a subsidized unit somewhere in Ontario? The answer for me as a New Democrat is a pretty simple one. If I want to direct the kind of money that this program is going to cost—and it's estimated to cost how much? I've heard all kinds of different figures, but it's anywhere between \$2 billion and \$6 billion, depending on who you listen to. But let's say that it costs even \$1 billion. The point is, am I better off directing those dollars to those people who need it most or giving it to higher-income earners? That's a pattern this government has basically decided to follow. Whenever it comes to their choice of deciding who they're going to help, they tend to help those people who need help the least.

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I think it's a very telling point that the government makes by way of its choice in this particular legislation. Those people with the highest property values are those who are going to get the biggest part of this money. I have to ask myself the question, both as an Ontarian and a legislator, is that really a wise policy decision? I say it's not. If we want to help seniors, let's help those who need help the most. Let's help those seniors who, for whatever reason, are not in a position after age 65 to have a \$1-million estate, take a one-month trip to Australia in July or travel wherever it is they have to travel; maybe they've got a camp somewhere up in northern or central

Ontario. Is it really those people we want to help the most or do you want to help that person on a fixed income? I think the choice for me would be a pretty simple one.

The second policy question I've got to ask myself is, if I was a Tory—thank God I'm not—why would I want to create a more onerous bureaucracy to administer this program? This government got elected on the idea that they were going to basically do away with government. They were going to make simpler government, they were going to reduce the size of government and they were going to get rid of all those civil servants. Well, they're creating a bureaucracy by doing this bill. You would think, OK, if you want to give a property tax credit to somebody with a \$1-million house somewhere in Rosedale, the least you would do is say—

Mr Prue: That's a cheap house.

Mr Bisson: That's a cheap house in Rosedale, exactly.
Interjection.

Mr Bisson: Yes, it probably is. I don't know Rosedale market values, obviously. But if I wanted to help somebody with a \$1-million house somewhere in Toronto, how do I administer that? Do I say let's have a bureaucratic system by which somebody has to take an application form, fill out the application form and, once the application form is filled out, send it in; then somebody in the bureaucracy has got to get it, fill it out, double-check it, send a couple of letters out to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs, check the tax rolls, get back to the Ministry of Finance and finally cut a cheque? Or do you just do it on the income tax?

Duh. I think the choice for me would be a pretty simple one. If I was a Tory, I'd say, "Ernie, if you're going to do this, do it on the income tax system. Make it a deduction," as we did with the original program, which I take it this will replace, which is an Ontario property tax credit for seniors. There's already a regime in the province of Ontario to deal with this. It has been around for a long time and, in fact, when we were government, we enhanced that program for seniors. Now I seem to remember the Tories cutting it somewhere back in 1995-96. I might be wrong; I'd have to go back and double-check that. I think that was one of the things the government did away with. It was one of those things we had done as a government that they sort of undid.

But we already have a regime in place that says if you're a senior, you're allowed to apply for an Ontario property tax credit. It's based on a cap, first of all, so it doesn't give the \$1-million homeowner more money; it gives to everybody up to a maximum of a certain amount of dollars. It's a simple system to administer. When you do your taxes at the end of the year, you fill out the form. If you're a property owner you just fill out the forms on your Ontario tax return and it's administered and given to you as a credit and you get a cheque back from the government, if you've got money coming back.

So I'd say those are two of the things that I think are a bit of a critique on the bill. If the government is actually going to go ahead and do this, you should put a cap on it

and you should put it into the Ontario tax system. It shouldn't be a rebate. I think that's an inefficient way of doing this.

What are some of the choices the government could have made in order to assist seniors? That's the question I started with. I think there are a whole bunch of things this government could have done but, unfortunately, they're choosing not to. My good friend Mr Prue from Beaches-East York talked about how, if we're going to give money to seniors, why shouldn't we be giving money to kids or single parents or whomever? What are some of the choices the government could have made? They could have chosen to increase the disability pension for those people on Ontario disability pensions, something they say they're going to do but we haven't seen yet. Why is it that the government is in a big rush to pass this bill in order to give seniors a tax credit on the education portion of their property tax but they're not in a hurry to announce whatever the increase is supposedly going to be for people on Ontario's disability program? Good question. Again, it's a question of choices is all I'm saying.

The other thing is, you say to yourself, "What about some of the choices they could have made in communities like James Bay in order to assist seniors in those communities?"

Just last week, on Tuesday, in Timmins, I attended a meeting with the community leaders from across the James Bay; from Peawanuck down to Moosonee, Moose Factory, Mayor Luke Cool, Chief Norm Hardisty and his people, Pat Chilton and his people from the Weeneebayko General Hospital, people from the James Bay General Hospital, my pilot friend—you know, sometimes you lose a name; it will come back to me in a second—Peter Fabricius, people from Fort Albany like Mike Metatawabin, Leo Friday from Kashechewan, Theresa Hall from Attawapiskat and Chief Mike Gull and also Sam Hunter who were at that particular meeting.

We talked about trying to move from a system of federal hospitals that we have in Moose Factory toward a system of provincial hospitals and provincial systems in order to provide very basic things like long-term-care service. If you're a senior living in Attawapiskat, Fort Albany, there's absolutely nowhere for you to live if you need to go into a long-term-care institution—there is none. Can you imagine living in a community in southern Ontario of 2,000 people and there's not a bed available if you're a senior, or for that fact, anyone needing to live in a long-term-care facility? There are no long-term-care services in any of those communities.

Now, it's not Mr Newman's fault; it's not the provincial government's fault. The reason we have this mess is because the federal government is responsible for health services on reserves. As I said in my presentation to the Mushkegowuk Council and others last Tuesday, the problem is the federal government says, "Oh, so sad. Far away. Can't see it. Who cares?"

The debate we were having on Tuesday, the discussion was, do we move from a federal hospital to a

provincial hospital for the James Bay? I said, "Yes, please. Let's do it." One of the reasons that I said we do that is if you look at the federal Ministry of Health, they don't have the kind of bench that we have in our ministries of health and long-term care, two separate ministries now, of experts to be able to deal with the long-term-care services and health care services in our communities. For example, I made the point that in the federal government there are but two federal hospitals in their system across all of Canada, one in Kingston and one in Moose Factory. What kind of support does the federal government have as far as expertise to allow them to help do planning and run a particular hospital?

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: Exactly about that much, maybe one or two fingers up. What I said is it's analogous to a hockey game. Imagine being in the playoffs and you have the choice of what team you're going to serve on. You can serve on one team that has one star player, no defence, no goaltending, or you get on a team that all around doesn't have a bunch of stars, but it has some pretty strong hockey players. You know who is going to win. The point I made is we need to move to the province for the simple reason that the province understands we have to have an integrated approach when it comes to health care.

So when it comes to choices and the kind of choices we can make for the people of the James Bay, as our government is doing and as the Ministry of Health is doing—credit to them—we're moving toward that transfer of that federal hospital over to the province, let's work toward there so we can do some very basic things.

For example, why not have regional planning for the James Bay when it comes to health services? It would only make sense. How do you plan for health services in those communities? Can you believe—and the Minister of Long-Term Care would probably know this—there is no planning on the part of the federal government when it comes to integrated health care in the James Bay area or any of the reserve areas in all of Canada? How stupid. How would you ever run your ministry if we didn't have that kind of link with our district health councils that advise us on the kinds of things we need to do in order to make sure that both our long-term-care system and other health services are working together?

So we put those ideas forward. What I saw in the room and what I have seen of people talking in the communities is, although people are worried about the transfer from the federal government to the province because they worry about treaty rights, I say to them and I say by way of this debate, we can guarantee treaty rights by way of legislation, as we did in Sioux Lookout with Howard Hampton when we transferred the federal hospital over to the province. We basically said that protecting treaty rights is one of the main cornerstones of that legislation.

But the other thing is that we need to make sure once we transfer we take that integrated approach so that the choices we make are that if you're a senior living in Attawapiskat or Fort Albany or Kashechewan, you at

least have a chance of being able to get a long-term-care bed; that if you're a person who needs long-term-care services in one of those communities, you have the services of something like a CCAC—it may not be a community care access centre for James Bay; it might be another type of organization, because it's a population of 12,000 people. You may not want to set up a whole other structure. You may want to have one health care planning authority that's responsible for all of that. But we would have a much more integrated approach to health care by moving over to the province. Those are some of the choices that I think we could have made: how much the rebate on the education portion of property tax is going to cost the province and the kind of good that we'll get out of it, versus making sure we have good health services in our aboriginal communities across all of Ontario.

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People see me get up and they always hear me talk about James Bay. Well, that's where I come from. Those are my constituents. But the story is the same for all First Nations communities across the province. Some fare a little bit better than others in the southern part of the province. But generally, health services in those communities are not anywhere near what they need to be. So I say, those are some of the choices that the government could have made.

Let me get on my hydro horse now. The government could have decided to fix the hydro mess that they created when they opened the market.

Mr Prue: There isn't enough money.

Mr Bisson: Mr Prue makes the point there isn't enough money to fix the problem now. But when the government, about a year ago now, opened the market, I remember standing in the Legislature here as my leader Howard Hampton was asking questions, day after day, last May and April before the opening of the market. He got up and said to the then Minister of Energy, "The rates are going to go up. You're going to have shortages of electricity in the summer and the rates are going to go through the roof. What are you doing in order to protect people?"

What did they say, Mr Eves and Mr Stockwell, who was then Minister of Energy? "You don't know what you're talking about, Mr Hampton." Jim Wilson was the other one: "Look at California. Everything's fine over there. In Alberta everything's wonderful. Everything's great." Rates went through the roof. By the fall of last year, the government had to admit that they had created a real mess and decided they'd try to fix it by creating a cap. Well, I'm here to give you some examples of how this hasn't really fixed our problem. I've got constituents across my riding—and I'm sure that every member in the assembly has the same; I would really like to see some Conservative members get up in the House and help me with this in order to convince their now Minister of Energy, Mr Baird, to fix this problem—lots of them seniors, who can barely afford to pay their hydro bills.

Let me give you an example. I was in my Kapuskasing constituency office on Friday. I've got four constituency

offices in my riding. It's fairly large. The other one's in the airplane. That's how I service James Bay, but that's another story. I've scared more people flying that thing—but we'll go there some other time.

Mr Prue: I still have white knuckles.

Mr Bisson: Look at him. He's got white knuckles and he only flew with me once or twice. Oh, I could tell a couple of stories. But we won't go there right now.

Let me give you an example. This is Mr and Mrs Joncas from Kapuskasing.

M. et M^{me} Joncas sont des citoyens de la ville de Kapuskasing, où ils ont eu une expérience très négative avec combien ils paient pour leur facture d'hydro comparé à ce qu'ils payaient avant. J'ai pris la chance de regarder leur facturation d'hydro pour les deux dernières années. Si on regarde ce qu'ils ont payé pour l'électricité, en 2002, au mois de mars, ils ont payé 198 \$. C'était pour une utilisation de 1 830 kilowatts pour le mois de mars. Au mois de mars de cette année pour un peu plus d'électricité, pas tellement gros, 865 \$. On parle d'une augmentation de 198 \$ à 865 \$. L'année passée, au mois d'avril, ils ont payé 245 \$. Combien est-ce qu'ils paient cette année? C'est 440 \$; au mois de mai, 362 \$, seulement pour l'électricité. M. et M^{me} Joncas disent, « Écoute, il y a un bout à tout. On ne peut pas continuer à payer des factures comme ça, espérant qu'une bonne journée on va encore avoir les moyens pour les payer. » Ils disent, « Écoute, on est égoïste. On n'est plus capable. C'est rendu au bout de nos capacités de payer. »

J'ai soulevé à l'Assemblée justement la semaine passée, M. Joe Bergeron de Kapuskasing, un autre qui a la même histoire. Il est parti d'une facture de 400 \$ au mois de janvier 2002, et au mois de janvier 2003, 850 \$.

Tu te dis, si un gouvernement a le choix, un choix certainement qu'il pourrait faire serait d'assister les personnes d'âge d'or, comme tout Ontarien, avec la facturation de l'hydro. Ça ne tient pas debout.

If you look at a lot of the hydro bills this year, it's really interesting how they're working out hydro charges nowadays. For example, I have Mr Joncas's hydro bill here. As I said, they paid \$198—Bert, get a load of this—\$198 in March 2002 and \$865 this March. You're going to tell me the cap is working? That's not double; that's not triple; it's not even quadruple the rate.

Mind you, there are some really weird things in the way they've calculated the \$865, but basically the story is always the same. If you look at energy charges year for year as you now hold out your electricity bills, it used to be you would pay so many cents per kilowatt. "Here's your usage times the factor and you pay whatever."

Now what happens is, if you look at all these hydro bills, they're virtually the same. The energy charges you now pay on your current hydro bill are probably pretty close to what you paid last year for the same usage. In the case of Mr and Mrs Joncas, their energy charges were \$167.18. As you go through the older bills, it would be about the same amount for the years before. The difference is all these other things that they've got on their bills—my God, I'm trying to figure out some of these. They're quite complex the way they're done.

This particular bill is in French, frais de livraison de l'hydro un—basically delivery charges from Hydro One: service charges, relative volume charges, transmission line charges, the debt, the GST etc. That basically ends up doubling your bill. Where you used to pay, let's say, \$160 all told for your hydro bill, if you now look at your bill, your energy charge—the cap that Ernie Eves talks about—is virtually about what you paid in previous years, but where they get you is on all the service charges.

I've got hydro bill after hydro bill from seniors across Timmins-James Bay, who are saying, "We just can't afford to pay any more. You keep on giving us bills like that, we're at a point where we're not going to be able to pay." For people who are electrically heated, oh, my Lord, they're at the point they're just not able to make it any more.

I was talking to another couple—and I forget their name. I believe it was in Fauquier or Moonbeam about three or four weeks ago when I was up there. They were saying they were electrically heated. Every year they used to pay a fairly hefty bill in January and February. They've got an older house that's not energy retrofitted. It doesn't have that type of insulation and windows, so they paid quite a bit before. I think they told me that they usually paid something like \$400 in January and about \$450 in February. You figure that was their electric heat, hot water and their lights. When they got their bill after the first reading of their hydro meter in January, it had doubled. They had gone from \$400 to almost \$900 in the month of January this year. They decided at that point to shut off the electric heat.

Here's this guy, who's not in the best of shape any more—he's 70-some-odd years old—running around trying to find firewood to fire up the wood stove. They have a wood stove and they were only using it every now and then for something cozy to sit at when you want to look at a fire, roast a marshmallow or whatever you might do. Here's this guy now trying to heat his house with wood. He had not prepared himself for that because, as he says, "Quite frankly, I stopped heating with wood some years ago because I'm just not in shape any more to go out and get the wood. I don't have a chainsaw. I gave it to my son-in-law. So here I was in February, in the middle of winter, trying to call everybody to bum wood. One neighbour came over with a cord of red pine. The other neighbour came over with a couple of loads of birch. I had a couple of buddies of mine and we took a chainsaw. You should have seen us. We were like the Three Stooges." It's not nice to say, but they're all fairly elderly gentlemen. They got in a pickup truck and rode down the road trying to find some birch. Then they remembered they had to have a permit, so they had to run all the way back to Kapuskasing to get the permit from MNR because they wanted to be law-abiding citizens. There they went back out trying to cut down a birch. He says, "It was quite something. Like three of us were the foreman and who was going to grab the chainsaw." It's a bit of a calamity, but those are some of the choices

people are having to make when it comes to their hydro bills.

I just use those examples of Mr and Mrs Joncas and M. Bergeron from Kapuskasing.

I've got other ones over here when it comes to businesses within my riding. I've got one here, a guy who owns a diner. I don't have permission to use his name, so I don't want to use his name in the Legislature. He gives me his hydro bill for what appears to be the month of January last year where he paid \$851. That's what he paid for hydro last year at this time. This year—I'm trying to find the bill here; if I had had this all organized, I'd have been all right—it's \$1,853, double. What do you do when you're a small business person and all of a sudden your bill doubles in January? There are only so many clients who walk in your door. The government's response is, "Maybe you should lower the price on coffee and French toast and bacon and eggs, and more people are going to come in to buy your product." It costs more in electricity and gas to make the coffee, the bacon and eggs, and everything else that you're going to make, and there's not a heck of a margin on that to start with, so he is not able to do that.

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I've got another one over here who has a small grocery store. This one really takes the cake. Last year for the month of February, this guy paid \$1,500 for his hydro bill—a small grocery store, a mom-and-pop operation: a bunch of coolers, freezers, that kind of stuff. This year it was \$3,816. You're going to tell me it's the guy's usage from January 2002 to January 2003, because we had a colder winter? I asked this question of the Minister of Energy the other day. I said this guy paid \$1,500 in January 2002 and paid \$3,800 in January 2003, and the minister says, "Oh, it's usage." Usage? Come on; it was cold last winter, but it wasn't that cold. Yes, it was colder than what we're used to but you're going to tell me that this guy's hydro bill more than doubled because it another 10 degrees cooler?

People understand it. If you're wondering why you're low in the polls, people get this stuff. They don't the details: market opening and IMOs and deregulation. They don't understand all the detail. All they know is: \$1,500 and \$3,800. Something's wrong. I say it's a question of choices. This government decides it wants to give a tax rebate on the education portion of property tax where they could have chosen to help people with their hydro bills.

I've got another over here, Mr Kelly, who has a hydro bill. This is a beauty. He's got a new hot water tank, though. That throws it off a little so his usage is a little bit higher, but still, you're not going to tell me that a hot water tank assumes all of this: \$263 for February 2002 and \$851 in 2003. You're telling me the cap is working? Okay. Mind you, he's got double the hot water tank that he had last year. The guy made the point, and that's why this big orange and green sticker is on here. He says he's got a bigger hot water tank, but when you look at his usage from what it was last year, it's not that much. His

usage is up about—I'm just doing quick math—about 30%. The last time I checked, \$263 versus \$851 is a heck of a lot more than a 30% increase.

I can go through hydro bill after hydro bill, and I will, because I have another one over here—I almost forgot that one—that are making it impossible for people to feel good about how much money they've got at the end of the month.

I've got another over here. He writes me a letter—this one I don't quite understand—May 12, 2003, addressed to myself. It says, "Hydro One is ripping off customers like me by charging ridiculous delivery charges to increase revenue" because the fixed rate imposes 4.3 cents per kilowatt-hour. Here's a guy, Ed Jensen, who writes this letter. He doesn't understand market opening; he doesn't understand IMO. He just puts it in simple English. He says, "Hydro One is ripping off customers like me by charging ridiculous delivery charges to increase revenue because of the fixed rate imposed at 4.3 cents. Gilles, I trust you can do something to correct this injustice."

Well, to the minister, John Baird, what are you going to do for Mr Jensen? Mr Jensen is saying: "I don't understand all the detail. All I know is I'm paying more than I did last year and you put all these ridiculous charges on my hydro bill."

You're supposed to be the government that makes things simple. You're supposed to be the government of ungovernment, of doing away with government bureaucracies. All he knows is—he's a guy like me, fairly straightforward, not very sophisticated, just like me—he used to get a hydro bill that said X amount of electricity times X amount of charge equals so much. Now he gets a hydro bill and it's got all kinds of little additions on it that talk about—oh God, am I going to go through this? I'm trying to find one of the bills that have it. All of my bills here are in French; that's interesting. It goes to show you that there's a large francophone community in the riding of Timmins-James Bay that, when they get the opportunity to request some services in French, are taking their services in French, including from Ontario Hydro, which is very nice to see.

Mr Jensen goes on to write that he attaches copies of his bills and says this is an abuse of hydro and that he's paying more than he ever did before. He makes the suggestion—and I'm not so sure this will fix his problem. He says, "In the meantime, I insist on paying my hydro bill differently. Please read my meter every three months and bill me only once," to pay it quarterly instead of monthly, because he figures he's going to get fewer charges if it's read three times. I think that's what he's getting at. Well, Mr Jensen, that's not going to fix your problem. What's going to fix your problem is for the government to try to put the genie back in the bottle and fix the problem they originally caused by opening the market.

We're still on an open market in hydro. If people think the government has re-regulated the hydro industry, they've got something else coming. We're still getting

hydro every day. In fact, in many communities across northern Ontario—and I imagine it's happening in southern Ontario—you've got company after company in all kinds of financial problems, as far as very low bottom lines or no bottom lines, that are having to do layoffs.

For example, Falconbridge, in my riding, is the largest hydro customer in the province. A lot of people wouldn't know that. The largest single customer of Hydro One is in Timmins at Falconbridge mine. We're not even talking about the mine; we're just talking about the metallurgical site, where they have a refinery, a smelter, a zinc concentrate plant and various plants that they operate on that particular site.

Things got so bad last year, when you guys opened the market, that in the months of July and August I was getting four or five phone calls a week from both union and management at Falconbridge saying, "We're having to shut the plant down. Electricity has gone through the roof," because the way their building is set up they get actual charges for whatever hydro had to pay to produce electricity. Last summer, when we had shortages, they had to import electricity from the United States, where it is unregulated, where it is privatized and certainly much more expensive than in Ontario. They basically had to pay the through price, and on 30 minutes' notice the plant had to shut down. Tell me how you shut down a zinc plant or a copper mine or a smelter in 30 minutes. It was a question of having to lose a lot of money.

This year the company has decided that they're going to deal with this problem in a different way: it's called layoffs for three months. We have over 300 employees who work on a particular line at the Falconbridge mill in Timmins up at the metallurgical site who are going to be in a position of being laid off for three months. One of the key reasons they're getting this layoff is energy prices. There are other mitigating factors, and I grant that to the government. The low American dollar is making our sale of goods into the United States much less profitable. When there's a 10-cent rise in the Canadian dollar versus the American dollar, it affects the bottom line and that's part of the issue. So I give some concession to that point. The price of the metal itself is an issue. But when I sit down and talk to Falconbridge, they're saying to me, "In fact, one of the issues for us is the cost of energy—not only electricity, but natural gas," which is the other issue that I want to talk about a little bit later.

I'm going to Falconbridge and meeting with them on Friday morning, where we're going to be sitting down and talking about what kinds of things we can do from the provincial government standpoint to help Falconbridge not so much restructure—because they do a fairly good job of running themselves—but those issues that are in our provincial control. What can we do as a province to affect the bottom line so that they don't have to possibly extend that shutdown should energy prices persist the way they think they might? I'll be meeting with them to go over that.

Also, the other thing I heard—and this is just a rumour; I've got to confirm it by way of Tembec—is that

apparently the mill in Smooth Rock Falls is in danger. One of the issues that they're having is—and again, I want to qualify this. I haven't confirmed this. But I was told on the weekend, as I was driving through, that Tembec is saying that their pulp mill in Smooth Rock Falls may be shut down for a while because there is more money to be made selling electricity out of their power dam than there is running a pulp mill. People in Smooth Rock Falls are plenty worried.

I put a call into Tembec late Friday. I've been here in the House all day, so I haven't had a chance—I'm sure they've called me back by now and I'll be finding out the details of all of that. Again, energy prices are a big factor in those decisions.

You have mills around the province that are in that very same situation. DaimlerChrysler was poised to make a huge announcement in Windsor, over a \$1-billion investment in Ontario. It would have been one of the first of such investments that we've seen in this province in about 10 years, when it comes to a car manufacturer making major investments in the province. Did they stop that decision or just put it on hold? I think they stopped it. One of the reasons cited was energy prices. They said, "Given the price of electricity in Ontario, and given some other factors, we're not going ahead with our investment." And when you take a look at it, the answer is so simple: when you've got public power, electricity is a lot less expensive. The provinces of Quebec and Manitoba are the two jurisdictions with the cheapest power in North America, and both are publicly run systems. Ontario used to be the third cheapest, but now that we've deregulated and opened the market, we're up there with the medium of everybody else. So we've lost one of the competitive advantages we had in Ontario. It's a very simple thing: if you're going to compete in a North American economy and have a high-wage economy like ours is in Ontario, as it is in other places, you have to find other things to make yourself competitive. One of those things for Ontario is energy prices. One of the choices the government could have made in order to be able to assist seniors, other people and local economies was to make sure we have energy policies in this province that are second to none when it comes to keeping Ontario a profitable place to do business.

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I'll be starting a tour a little bit later this month along with my other northern colleagues, Mr Hampton, Ms Martel and Mr Martin. We'll be travelling through northern Ontario and going to various communities to talk to people about what kinds of policies we think the government should be implementing in order to stimulate the economic engine of northern Ontario. There are two different issues: how do you safeguard our primary industries that are there now, lumber and mining—or in my case, mining and lumber because it's a big player in my part of the province—and how do you develop new business opportunities in northern Ontario? For example, for Falconbridge—I'll be meeting with them on Friday—one of the other issues that is a concern to them is the

cost of shipping. We have Ontario Northland, a crown-owned railway, which has had a real problem over the last five or six years in trying to organize itself to meet the needs of its customers by way of price and other issues, because the government has been too busy trying to sell them off. While the railway has been busy trying to negotiate with people like CN, they've not been able to organize themselves to provide a better service for people in northern Ontario and to do the job that they need to do when it comes to economic development in northern Ontario. There's a little bit of good news today: Canadian National said, "We don't want to buy Ontario Northland." That was announced today. And that's actually really good news. I'm glad that's happened, because it possibly means an end to another privatization in northern Ontario.

Now to the government's credit, to an extent—I'm always one to say that if government does something right, say so, and if they do something wrong, you've got to say that too—one of the reasons CN doesn't want to buy Ontario Northland is because Mr Eves has made a condition that we were not to lose jobs as part of this sale. They kept on telling us that we were going to get jobs, but when it came for CN to put the ink on the paper, CN was not able to guarantee that we'd be protecting jobs in northern Ontario. What was going to happen was what I very much feared. We were going to have an out-migration of jobs from northern Ontario that maintained and ran Ontario Northland; we would have lost all of the administrative positions; we would have lost virtually all of the maintenance shops—and that would have gone to some yard somewhere, to CN, wherever, out of northern Ontario. We probably would have lost 400 to 500 jobs in the north. CN, not able to guarantee those jobs, has decided not to buy Ontario Northland. That's probably a good thing. Now we need to get the government to decide with us what Ontario Northland needs to do in order to provide better services to the people of northeastern Ontario and play the role that they need to play when it comes to economic development.

There are all kinds of opportunities. How do we arrange shipping rates for the people of James Bay so it's more competitive for them to organize their economy? To ship anything from Cochrane up to Attawapiskat, which Ontario Northland is part of, at least up to Moosonee, we need to find a way to make competitive freight rates. Do we need to put transportation subsidies in place in order to reduce the cost of shipping goods by way of air up to James Bay? How do we support those that are there now, like MTL, which is the company in Moosonee that does the shipping on barges all the way, not only on James Bay but for us, because it's Ontario, on the James Bay side? What can we do in order to assist them so that they're able to reduce their rates, so that goods going into those communities are a little bit cheaper? There are a whole bunch of things that we could be doing that this government has decided not to do.

I've also said that one of the issues that's going to be fast coming upon us—and again it's a question of choices

that the government makes—is the question of gas prices. I'm not talking about the gas you put in Mr Curling's Cadillac; I'm talking about the gas that goes inside your gas-fired—

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: He told me he got a Mercedes-Benz this week. I'm sure that was just a joke.

Anyway, we know that gas prices for heating our homes went up quite a bit last year. Again, I've got to point out, what has happened in the gas industry? The federal government, the Mulroney government when they were there, deregulated the gas industry and the pipelines. Ontario has taken a very laissez-faire approach as well, first under Mike Harris and now in the current regime of Mr Ernie Eves. I like to call them regimes. George Bush used the word a lot, and I thought it was misused, because we have regimes on this side of the Atlantic as well. It's true. They are regimes. I don't care how you see it.

The point is that gas prices have gone up. Again, it's an example of where they say the private sector can do it best. Well, in some cases that's true, but what happened to the gas industry? We're now having to pay—the prices are going through the roof, and it's estimated that prices could increase anywhere from 5% to 25% this fall, depending on whose figures you use. What are people going to do? What are seniors going to do, those living on fixed incomes? What is Isabel Bassett going to do, with her \$6-million home? When you're having to pay higher energy costs for both electricity and—

Interjections.

Mr Bisson: It's not \$6 million?

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: No, but she's going to have to pay more for energy.

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: I know Isabel, and she's no senior. She's a very nice lady. I've always had a lot of respect for Isabel.

My point is, what do you do when basically you're having to pay higher electricity and gas prices and you're on a fixed income? It's going to be very tough for seniors to do that.

Again, it's a question of the choices the government has made. The government has chosen to do this rebate on the education portion of property taxes, supposedly as a way to give something to seniors. I'm just saying there are a whole bunch of things you could have done that could be a lot more advantageous to seniors than what you're suggesting.

In the case of Mr and Mrs Joncas, whose hydro bills I talked about, they've had a little bit more than a \$500 increase in hydro in one month alone. Your entire tax credit on their property, which is probably worth about \$80,000 in market value in Kapuskasing, will get them about \$400. So it doesn't measure up. At the end of the day, if you'd really wanted to make a big bang for your buck, you could have done something on the hydro bill or the gas bill.

The other thing I just want to talk about very quickly, because I may not have an opportunity to raise this during the session—the issue is one that has to be raised in a budget bill, and this is a budget bill, so I'm able to raise it—is the question of insurance. I've got a gentleman in my riding who sent me a letter, a Mr Michael Lefevre. He's been in contact with my office and raised quite an interesting issue that I want to look into. If Mr Lefevre is watching, he'll probably get a call from me tomorrow. He is basically a parent whose two kids have gone off to university or college and are away for seven or eight months of the year for their post-secondary education. This spring, when he got his notice of assessment for his automobile insurance, his auto insurance went through the roof. So he called the insurance company and said, "Jeez, how come I'm paying so much?" They said, "Because your kids are on the policy, your rates are going to go through the roof this year." He said, "Well, hang on a second. My kids don't drive my truck or car. Basically it's me. My kids don't drive it. I don't let them drive it. I can't afford to let them drive it." The insurance company said, "Not a problem. If you're willing to sign a waiver, then we will not put those two kids on your auto insurance policy, so therefore you'll pay less." But the kicker is, they can never be insured by the insurance company again. Let's say your kids come back and this summer you sign a waiver to take them off your insurance, but one child or two kids come back after graduation and you decide that you want to put them on your policy. You will never be able to. I thought, what an odd policy that is, a very strange policy.

2120

It brings us to the whole issue of auto insurance. Auto insurance in this province, as across the country, is going through the roof. It is estimated, on average, about a 35% increase is what people are paying additionally for auto insurance in Ontario this year. In fact, in New Brunswick—I was going to say Nova Scotia, but it's New Brunswick that's in the provincial election—one of the key issues in that provincial campaign is auto insurance. What's interesting is, you've got the Liberals who are running on an NDP platform of bringing driver-owned auto insurance into New Brunswick. Man, I thought I'd seen everything. That's been an issue that neither the Liberals or the Tories have ever wanted to touch.

Here's the best one: in Nova Scotia, the Premier of the province—which is a Conservative government—Mr Hamm, has come by and whacked the insurance companies and said, "I'm rolling back rates." If something didn't happen, he was going to be in all kinds of political trouble because rates in that province have gone up 65%.

Interjection: Shame.

Mr Bisson: Well, shame to the insurance companies, exactly. We'll talk about why that is in a second. But what happens is that even a Conservative premier, Mr Hamm, who is not known to be a left-leaning New Democrat, as you guys would like to paint us, understands that it's a huge problem and he's imposed a rollback on rates in Nova Scotia.

Clearly, there's a hue and cry of Canadians out there saying there's something deeply wrong in the insurance industry where people in Ontario are getting 35% increases and people in Nova Scotia are getting 65%. Interesting to note are Manitoba and Saskatchewan, the socialist havens of the west; it used to be British Columbia as well. They have the lowest increases in insurance. Manitoba is around 4% and I believe BC is 7%, and they're both publicly owned and administered auto insurance systems. Why are we paying 35% in Ontario and 4% in Manitoba?

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: Well, I'm going to get to that point. It's because of the way we secure the insurance. In Manitoba, they have a publicly owned system that is much more effective, as far as being able to pass whatever savings you've got right on to the rates so drivers pay less. But also, what happens is that they don't invest all of their money in the stock market like most of the insurance companies did everywhere else except for Manitoba, British Columbia and Saskatchewan. What they've done in Ontario, as they've done in places like Nova Scotia, is the way that insurance is regulated is you have to have a certain percentage of all claims—if everybody was to put in their claim all at the same time, to put this in simple English, you have to have enough money to cover a certain percentage of those claims, and they were counting on that money by investments in the stock market. Anybody who has been in the market over the last two years understands what the performance has been. It's made some of those insurance companies very poor real quick. So in order to make up for their bad investment decisions in the market, they're charging people who are buying auto insurance extra premiums to cover their losses in the stock market.

Mr Klees understands something of finance and understands something of the stock market. Can you imagine, Mr Klees, if you and I were to go and buy a stock, and the stock would be devalued by 50%, that we'd just turn around and charge our customers that money directly to make up for our bad investment decisions? Nobody would stand for that. I don't believe there's anybody in this House who would stand for that. Why are we allowing the insurance companies to do it? That's what they're doing. They're saying, "Oops. Too bad, so sad. We've made some bad investment decisions; we've lost money in the stock market. Not a problem; we're going to go to the people who own cars and we're going to charge them more insurance. Or, we're just going to stop insuring certain classes of drivers and certain industries."

For example, last summer, as you all had in your ridings, the trucking industry was very heavily hit. A lot of truckers found themselves in a position of not being able to renew their insurance because they happened to have a claim in the last two years.

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): Pilot cars.

Mr Bisson: Pilot cars? What is a pilot car?

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: OK. I thought pilot like air—

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: Insurance companies are basically saying, "We're going to stop insuring a whole raft of drivers in different businesses, because they're a higher risk to the insurance company." They haven't saved enough money by throwing those people into the Facility market. It resulted in people having to sell their trucks and shut down trucking firms. They're now saying, "Oh, well, we lost a bunch of money on the stock market. Not to worry: we're going to go back to the policyholders and charge them 30% to 65% more so we can offset our losses on the stock market." Boy, that is really something. When Mr Lefebvre wrote to me a couple of days ago—I just got the letter early this morning in my Timmins office, as I grabbed my binder. People are saying there's something wrong.

If this government wants to help seniors and other people in this province, there are certain things we can do that are under provincial control that will put dollars directly in their pockets. One way of doing that, as I argued, is trying to reform the insurance industry or find some way to get them to do what they've got to do. If not, let's move to driver-owned auto insurance. It's kind of a radical idea for New Democrats to suggest, but I think the debate is long in coming. It's not in our platform at this point and probably won't be, but it's a debate that is going to overtake all of the political parties after a while as people see their insurance bills go through the roof.

I just remind people that there is an option: there's driver-owned auto insurance. People in Manitoba and British Columbia pay far less than we pay here. In fact, I think it was DML towing, but I may have the company name wrong; I hope I don't. A gentleman came in to see me from one of the towing companies—this guy specializes in towing large vehicles like big trucks—and said, "Jeez, my insurance; whoa, God, I can't afford it any more. Look at this." I said, "Do me a favour. I'm going to give you the number for the Manitoba, Saskatchewan and British Columbia insurance companies. Call them and ask them how much you would pay if you were in their jurisdiction, doing business within their provinces." It was less than half the cost. If Manitoba, Saskatchewan and British Columbia can do it, why can't we do it in Ontario? That's the question I ask myself.

I want to end on one note, and it's a question of the government clearly having some choices they could have made in this budget and clearly having some choices they have made in helping seniors. Unfortunately, this government has indicated yet again that when it comes to deciding whose side they're on and whom they want to help, they tend to help those people who need less help. If we take a look at what they're doing with this particular tax measure, people with homes of high value are going to get the biggest share of the windfall, the property tax rebate, more than anybody else. I just think that's an upside-down way of doing it.

My income is about \$90,000 a year. I guess \$90,000 is what we get, somewhere around there—\$87,000, \$90,000. I need far less. I've never really paid too much

attention. All I know is that I do earn a fairly good living. My point is that a person like me making that kind of money needs far less help from this government than somebody who's trying to live on \$15,000 or \$20,000 a year. Those are the people we should be trying to help. Quite frankly, by helping—

Mr Prue: Or \$6,000 if they're on welfare.

Mr Bisson: Or \$6,000 on welfare; exactly. The money we could utilize in this particular program would go a long way to helping people at the other end of the income scale. It's a question of priorities. The government, when it comes to choosing, comes from a particular side of the tracks that says, "You know, people with money are the people who matter. Those are the ones." Ernie Eves, Jim Flaherty: those people are nice people. I've got nothing against them. I think Jim is a nice guy and Ernie is a nice guy. I've got nothing against them personally, but where they come from philosophically is a different place. They come from that side of the tracks that basically says, "The people you really pay attention to, the people you've really got to help when you're in government, are the people with money because, after all, they matter." I'm not saying they don't. I think people do matter at all ends of the income scale. I'm just saying that a government and a society are measured by how we treat people in our society who need help the most.

Mr Levac: Winston Churchill.

Mr Bisson: Was it Churchill who said that? Winston had some pretty good sayings. We can talk about a few others in other debates. He was quite good.

The thing is, this government has made a choice and they've said, "Help those, and don't help those in the lower income scales." I think that's rather unfortunate.

The government has announced, by way of rolling out their election document, that they're going to increase pensions for Ontarians with disabilities. I just say, why weren't we dealing with that in the Legislature today rather than trying to give somebody who owns a \$6-million home in Rosedale a large rebate cheque instead of giving somebody who lives on disability income somewhere in the middle of Ontario or in northern Ontario the money they need? I think the simple choice is to help people who most need that help, and that tends to be people in the lower part of the income scale.

I want to thank members for giving me the opportunity to raise the various issues I've raised in this debate. Again, this was not a matter of policy for this government when it came to this particular issue; it's a matter of politics and something I think they will pay for at the polls in a very dear way.

The Acting Speaker: It now being close to 9:30 of the clock, this House will stand adjourned until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow afternoon.

The House adjourned at 2130.

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Ces listes figurent dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et du premier lundi de chaque mois. Par contre, une liste des circonscriptions paraît si l'espace est disponible.

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of Debates
(Hansard)****Journal
des débats
(Hansard)****Tuesday 3 June 2003****Mardi 3 juin 2003**Speaker
Honourable Gary CarrPrésident
L'honorable Gary CarrClerk
Claude L. DesRosiersGreffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 3 June 2003

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 3 juin 2003

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

REQUEST FOR OPINION

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): I beg to inform the House that pursuant to section 30 of the Members' Integrity Act, 1994, I have today laid upon the table a request from the member for Scarborough Centre to the Honourable Coulter Osborne, Integrity Commissioner, for an opinion on whether the member for Brant has contravened the act or Ontario parliamentary convention.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

VEHICLE INSURANCE

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): There are currently 100 independent professional pilot car operators in Ontario, four of which are in my riding of Brant. These pilot car operators escort wide loads on our highways. Since September 11, 2001, there has been an increasing problem in the pilot car industry in Ontario to obtain either automobile or business insurance. Rates prior to 9/11 were \$3,000 to \$5,000 annually. Now they are \$9,000 to \$15,000 annually, if an insurance company even accepts an application.

In the past two months, Ray Hauley, owner-operator of Rig Guard Oversize Load Specialists in Brantford and president of the association, has approached three different insurance brokers who have contacted 21 independent insurance companies. Although there has never been any charge of any violation by the 200 pilot car operators surveyed in Canada, all have refused to issue Mr Hauley insurance without reason.

Professional pilot car operators are being unjustly treated by the insurance industry and by the government of Ontario, which regulates that insurance industry. Unless the Ernie Eves government does something soon, 100 self-employed individuals will lose their jobs, resulting in a grave effect on even larger industries that cannot transport their wide loads on our highways within Ontario. I am urging the Ontario government to take immediate action to assist this highly skilled, extremely safe and important profession. Premier, do it now for the sake of those industries in my riding and ridings across Ontario. Please act as soon as you possibly can to get

them insurance that keeps big business moving on our highways.

PARAMEDIC PROGRAM

Mr AL McDonald (Nipissing): Today I rise before the House to speak about the launch of a new primary care paramedic program through CTS Canadian Career College in my riding of Nipissing.

Canadian Career College is the first private career college in Ontario able to address the acute need for paramedics in the province, particularly in northern Ontario. After two years in development, the intensive 52-week paramedic program is now available in both Sudbury and North Bay. The launch of this new paramedic program by CTS is an example of the unique contribution Ontario's private career colleges make and are making in communities across the province and northern Ontario.

North Bay General Hospital and the base hospital are very pleased that CTS has launched this program this year. The Nipissing district is underserved in the area of certified paramedics entering the workforce. This program will assist the hospital in the recruitment of locally trained paramedics who have the knowledge of local roads and waterways, which will be vital to providing emergency services to our citizens.

It's absolutely vital that we attract people with health care skills to the north, and this program certainly goes a long way to accomplishing that goal. I'd like to congratulate Carlos Carvalho, president of CTS Canadian Career College, and his team for taking this initiative in addressing the need for paramedics in northern Ontario. Mr Carvalho is a business leader, a community leader and a big booster of northern Ontario.

MUNICIPAL TAXATION

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): David Crombie says, "It's not a credible policy." Hazel McCallion called it "ridiculous and irresponsible." Hamilton Mayor Bob Wade agreed: "It doesn't make any sense."

What are these municipal leaders talking about? Of course it's the Ernie Eves plan to punish our cities and towns. Rejected by mayors, reeves and councils, this proposal from the Tory re-election platform is a perfect illustration of just how out of touch the Eves government is with the challenges facing our municipal leaders, despite the fact that the provincial government can continue

their downloading on municipalities without regard for their ability to pay. Whether it is for welfare, public health, policing or infrastructure, this government has the gall to insist that tying the hands of municipalities while piling on additional costs is a fair proposal.

I'm heartened to see our municipal leaders disagree with you, Mr Eves. Ken Boshcoff, mayor of Thunder Bay and president of AMO, was clear. He said, "It's a very bad idea. We've been approaching the province to help us with the tax situation and instead we're being made to look like the scapegoat. This idea has never been discussed with anyone in municipal government, ever"—so much for your ballyhooed memo of understanding with local government partners. Even Bill Murdoch and AL McDonald are running away from their platform. Over 50 councils have passed resolutions asking you to do just that, and many more will do so at their June council meetings.

I want to reassure our municipal partners in Ontario that a Dalton McGuinty government will strike a real new deal with you, sharing our tax room and not tying your hands. You deserve better than what Ernie Eves wants to give you.

LITERACY TESTS

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton): I'd like to draw the attention and—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Order. I'd like to hear the member who has the floor. Usually one member has the floor. That means the rest of you shut up.

The Chair recognizes the member for Halton.

Mr Chudleigh: Mr Speaker, I wonder if I could have my minute and a half back on the clock.

The Deputy Speaker: I'll give you all the time you need.

1340

Mr Chudleigh: Thank you, Mr Speaker. There seems to be a certain amount of frivolity in the House this afternoon.

I'd like to draw the attention of the Legislature to the success of the grade 10 students attending the Halton Catholic high school board. These students managed a 78% pass rate on the provincial literacy test—a mark well above the provincial average, and in fact it's in the very top percentile of the provincial average. This is well above the provincial average, and the students and teachers in the Halton Catholic system certainly deserve a round of applause for that tremendous success.

This of course begs the question, why is there a discrepancy between the Halton Catholic system and the rest of Ontario? There are several reasons these tests were instituted. The first step was in making sure high school students who graduate can read and write and to establish a standard. That standard is successful completion of the test. Then we wanted to give students time to increase their level of literacy if they were struggling, and that's why the test is given in grade 10.

The tests also provide a snapshot into the success of various boards of education. While the results are by no means definitive, especially on a single-year basis, over time the results do paint a picture of the levels of success of various boards and the ability of students within those boards.

It is well known that students in some boards face significant issues such as wide income disparities and large numbers of non-native-English speakers through immigration and other issues. However, what is not as well known is how these issues affect literacy results and, more importantly, how teachers and boards can most effectively pull up the scores of their students.

I commend the Ministry of Education for instituting these tests. I implore the boards of education throughout Ontario to make use of the results, and I congratulate the students and teachers in Halton for their excellent showing.

HEALTH CARE

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): My statement is to the Minister of Health. In the throne speech there is a sentence which says, "To increase the number of nurses practising in Ontario, your government will launch an aggressive nurse recruitment and retention program." That's a nice little philosophical statement. Let's look at reality. The reality out of last Friday's Belleville Intelligencer details the plans for Quinte Health Care: day surgery, eliminate one shift; emergency department, reduce registered nurse hours; operating room, eliminate one evening shift; post-anaesthetic care unit, eliminate evening shift; emergency department, reduce RN hours; combined medical, reduce RPN and ward clerk hours; special care unit, reduce RN hours. The reality is far, far different from that statement.

Your government spends \$75,000 every minute of every day on consultants. That's seven days a week, 365 days a year that your government spends \$75,000 per minute on consultants. My community says, "Give us 59 minutes of that consultant time." That will balance the \$4.4 million in painful cuts that my hospital corporation has had to do. All we ask is for 59 minutes of time from your friends to be directed toward health care. Minister, stand up for health care. Do something for health care for the people in all of Ontario.

SUDBURY SOILS STUDY

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): On September 12, 2001, the Ministry of the Environment announced that it and the Sudbury and district medical officer of health were requiring Inco and Falconbridge to conduct a human health risk assessment in the greater Sudbury area. The mining companies would use the results of new MOE soil samples—samples which have traditionally shown elevated levels of arsenic, nickel, copper and cobalt in our area.

The study is being managed by a technical committee of six partners, including Inco and Falconbridge. This is a clear conflict of interest. The study will determine if 125 years of mining has negatively affected the health of local residents. It will recommend what remedial action should be taken. How likely is it that Inco and Falconbridge will want evidence of significant problems made public? How likely is it they'll come forward with plans for remedial work if this is going to be costly?

A look at Inco's performance in Port Colborne is proof enough of why neither company should be on Sudbury's technical committee. Last week Inco finally released indoor air testing results from 31 Port Colborne homes, even though they'd been done since January. They were only released because an affected homeowner had serious respiratory problems and his doctor needed the information. The results showed that the air in the home contained enough nickel contamination to present a cancer risk 15 to 290 times greater than the MOE's tolerable risk level.

Inco is now pushing to have a study done by two researchers in North Carolina used to calculate cancer risks in Port Colborne. It's worth noting that one of the two authors of the North Carolina study is an employee of the Nickel Producers Environmental Research Association, which is partially funded by INCO.

The Minister of the Environment should take INCO and Falconbridge off the technical committee of the Sudbury soils study. The work is too important to be affected by any real or perceived conflicts of interest.

TRILLIUM HEALTH CENTRE

Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South): For those of us who have been able to carry on with our normal daily lives during the SARS outbreak, it is hard to comprehend the severe stress that front-line health care workers have endured over the past three months.

On May 29, I had the opportunity to meet with and thank the staff at the Trillium Health Centre in Mississauga, which held a SARS "Maskerade" party in appreciation of the team's remarkable efforts during the SARS era.

What can we say about the amazing women and men who have helped us contain this new disease while putting their own health and personal lives at risk? Some of the words that come to my mind are courage, caring, compassion, endurance, commitment to their profession and work ethic.

Imagine having to wear a mask continuously for days at a time, or the fear of making even one mistake in infection control. Imagine the complexity of the screening operations and the strain of taking the overflow from other hospitals that had to close. Imagine surviving on little sleep and not being able to see one's family.

Whether they are hospital staff, public health professionals, paramedics, security guards or scientists, these workers have endured some of the most difficult months of their lives. There are simply no adequate words to

commend their efforts, but there is one word that describes them all: heroes.

To all the players on our health care team at the Trillium Health Centre: we are extremely grateful, we salute your efforts and we are in awe of you, our real-life heroes. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

IMMIGRANTS

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain): Just when I thought that this divisive government had run out of scapegoats, including welfare recipients, teachers and civil servants, a new political low was struck. They picked a new group of victims: immigrants. The Tories announced with grand fanfare that illegal immigrants will be ineligible for OHIP and welfare recipients will be prevented from sponsoring immigrants. Mr Speaker, welfare recipients are not allowed to sponsor immigrants now, and illegal immigrants are already prohibited from using OHIP. We on this side of the House do not believe that the government should be deliberately creating scapegoats out of new immigrants in the minds of Ontarians to try to win an election. Indeed, most Ontarians are either immigrants or descendants of immigrants.

The real bottom line is this: our economy will not grow if our labour market does not grow. We, the Ontario Liberals, appropriately address immigration under our economy platform, while the Tories shamelessly place immigration in their crime policy.

Immigrants in this province, including my late father, understood what this government suddenly, and for political purposes, ignores: as immigrants, along with former refugees, we always knew it was a privilege to live in this country, an enormous privilege, but we also understood the enormous contributions we made that made Canada the country it is and the envy of the world.

Shame on this Premier. Scapegoating should be beneath the Premier of the land. He should apologize to all Ontarians, because this is an insult to all Ontarians.

NEUSTADT CRAB STEAK LOBSTERFEST

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): I am proud to let everyone in this House know about an event I recently attended in my riding called the Neustadt Crab Steak Lobsterfest. It included the efforts and hard work from the Neustadt and District Lions Club, who dedicated hours of their time to bring this annual affair to the local community and area.

The Neustadt and District Lions Club has been serving the crab and lobster dinners for over 20 years, and this year added the steak dinner to their menu, which was held at the Neustadt Arena. With the crabs imported from Alaska and a jam-packed hall, there were almost 900 meals served.

The evening also included live entertainment by The Westernaires. I would like to praise the band for their dedication. They played continuously for three hours. I

would also like to recognize the presence of the Neustadt volunteer firefighters, who were raffling tickets, and the agricultural society for the many volunteers they provided.

The success of this event is due to the hard work of all the Neustadt and District Lions Club members, their spouses, friends and volunteers from the Neustadt-Normanby-Carrick Agricultural Society. Thank you to all the people who came to enjoy the tasty food, listen to some good old country music and partake in a memorable day. It was truly a community event. I congratulate those involved and wish them all the best in organizing Crab Steak Lobsterfest 2004.

1350

VISITOR

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): On a point of order, Speaker: I'm sure you, with the rest of the House, want to join me in welcoming in the members' gallery west the longest-serving mayor in the history of the city of Hamilton, former Hamilton Mayor Bob Morrow.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Welcome.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

HEALTH INSURANCE AMENDMENT ACT (INSULIN PUMPS FOR DIABETICS), 2003

LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'ASSURANCE-SANTÉ (POMPES À INSULINE POUR DIABÉTIQUES)

Mr Duncan moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 76, An Act to amend the Health Insurance Act / *Projet de loi 76, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'assurance-santé.*

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? It is carried.

Would the member care to make a brief statement?

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): The bill amends the Health Insurance Act by making the provision of insulin pumps and supplies for them an insured service under the act.

Diabetes is a leading cause of blindness, amputation, kidney failure and heart disease in Ontario. Type 1, or juvenile, diabetes is a life-altering condition. While people with diabetes only make up 6% of Ontario's population, they account for 32% of heart attacks, 43% of failure cases, 30% of strokes, 51% of new dialysis patients and 70% of amputations.

An insulin pump not only prevents complications for young people but in many cases reverses them by putting a regular amount of insulin into the body that closely

matches what the body normally does. The cost of the pump prevents most Ontarians from having the use of it.

IRISH HERITAGE DAY ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 SUR LE JOUR DU PATRIMOINE IRLANDAIS

Bill 77, An Act proclaiming Irish Heritage Day / *Projet de loi 77, Loi proclamant le Jour du patrimoine irlandais.*

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? It is carried.

Would the member care to make a brief statement?

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It is my pleasure to support, as I encourage all members to support, their own personal heritage by bringing forward legislation that would help to celebrate our heritage, whatever that might be.

On the many occasions I've had the chance to visit Ireland, and particularly county Wicklow, it reinforced and reaffirmed for me how important my own particular culture and heritage is. So I would like to see March 17 celebrated unanimously as Irish Heritage Day.

CONDOMINIUM AMENDMENT ACT (TRANSIENT TENANCIES), 2003

LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES CONDOMINIUMS (LOCATIONS TEMPORAIRES)

Mr Smitherman moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 78, An Act to amend the Condominium Act, 1998 to limit the use of condominiums by transient tenants / *Projet de loi 78, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur les condominiums afin de limiter l'usage des condominiums par des locataires de passage.*

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? It is carried.

Would the member care to make a short statement?

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): This is a consumer protection bill. It amends the Condominium Act, 1998, to prevent owners of condominium units from leasing them or otherwise letting them for transient use unless the condominium declaration provides express authority for transient use.

ORAL QUESTIONS

SARS

Ms Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): My question is for the Minister of Health. Joining us in the gallery today are nurses from North York General Hospital. We're very pleased to welcome them here today. We are pleased to have them joining us here in the gallery

because I would like you to address them directly. They have very serious concerns about how the SARS outbreak has been handled, and we need answers. These are the people who are on the front lines. These are the people who put their lives at risk every day on the job. What they have to say is scary. For example, your SARS notice dated May 28 says that masks should be fitted properly. Can you imagine? These nurses say that's simply not happening. There are front-line health workers walking around with gaping masks.

This is just one of the issues that needs to be looked at. We believe the only way that you will find the real answers behind what went wrong is through a full public inquiry. Will you stand, address our nurses from North York and tell them you will call—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Thank you, Minister.

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I believe I can speak for every member of this House when I say to them and the people they represent that we are constantly impressed, and indeed awed, by our health workers' steadfastness, the amount of work they're doing and for putting themselves in harm's way to protect all of us in Ontario from the effects of this devastating disease. The term "hero" is sometimes overused in this day and age, but those in the audience today and the people they represent truly are heroes in the battle against SARS.

I would say to them that there are many questions that need to be answered and things that need to be investigated; as Minister of Health, I want those answers too. How did this happen? How did this happen a second time? Are there things we can learn? Are there ways in which we can improve for the future? Certainly our Premier and our government are absolutely committed to a full, fair, open and transparent process by which we can get to those very answers.

Ms Pupatello: The only way you will have a full, fair and open process is if you call a public inquiry. All those kind words that you and your colleagues on that side of the House continue to use, where nurses are concerned, will just be words if you don't back them up with action. For several weeks we have called for a full public inquiry. There are serious concerns: did government policy contribute to the spread; did government policy contribute to the second outbreak; did the individual lying unprotected in an ER hallway contribute to the spread; does the nursing casualization contribute to the spread? These are significant, tough questions for your government to have to answer. The only way that we will get to this is through a public inquiry. Will you stand in the House today and agree to a full public inquiry on SARS?

The Deputy Speaker: We expected these health care professionals to practise their profession at the very top elevation of the high respect you've given them, and I think I would ask that you practise yours the way you should too.

The Chair recognizes the Minister of Health.

1400

Hon Mr Clement: I can only say that of course we want to learn as much as we can about the impact of this devastating disease and how best to transform our hospital system and our health care system so we can learn from the situation. But I will tell you that when we met with the RNAO, the Ontario Nurses' Association, the College of Nurses of Ontario, the CPSO, the OMA and the OHA, they were, to a person, absolutely convinced that the wrong way to go about this would be an exercise in finger pointing similar to the one the honourable member is suggesting. The best way to go about this is to find the answers to the very questions we are asking and to ensure that our health care system performs in a way that Ontarians expect it to perform. Quite frankly, we are focused on that goal.

Ms Pupatello: Let me say that when Ontario lost seven people in Walkerton, we called for a public inquiry, which you granted. It resulted in a report that was lauded all around as the way to go to protect water and the residents.

We've lost over 30 people because of SARS, and you can't stand in the House today and say that it won't happen again, that we'll have government policy to protect the people of Ontario and protect these front-line workers when they have serious questions about the handling. They raised alarm bells days ago and they were ignored. They were told by superiors that they were being paranoid.

Minister, seven people died in Walkerton. We were prepared for an inquiry, which resulted in a report. You didn't call that finger pointing. Over 30 people have died. It is incumbent on you as the Minister of Health to protect us today and in the future. We call on you again today, in the name of these people in the House, to please call a public inquiry.

Hon Mr Clement: In the name of the people in the House and in the name of the people of Ontario, I can assure you that we will have a full, independent, open and transparent process by which we get to the answers that all of us want to get to. The way to do that, however, is to ensure that we have the ability to get to the answers without the finger pointing that every single constituency we have talked to wants to avoid. Maybe the honourable member delights in finger pointing, but I can tell you that the health workers in the system want to get to the answers and want to ensure that they can continue to work in a health care system that is defined by collaboration, co-operation and integration, and thereby success.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Ms Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): We'd like to return to the issue of Donorgate with the Chair of the Management Board, and my question is addressed to him. Yesterday we revealed that your biggest fundraiser lent your biggest donor taxpayer-guaranteed pension funds. Experts who operate other pension funds have said that is very unusual.

Claude Lamoureux, head of the Ontario teachers' plan, said this is not something most pension plans do, as they lack the tools to administer them properly. That teachers' pension plan is six times larger than the pension plan we're talking about. Given Lamoureux's comments, do you still expect us to believe that the deal cooked up between your top fundraiser and your top donor was truly in the public interest?

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Culture): The first thing I'll do is give the honourable member an opportunity to correct the inaccuracies in her statement yesterday.

Ms Pupatello: I think it's important to note for this House that the details released in this Legislature yesterday were from items that are tabled in the Legislature. Those are data that are a record in the Legislature.

Minister, yesterday we revealed that your biggest fundraiser lent taxpayer-guaranteed pension money to your biggest donor. Today we learned that the biggest fundraiser only lent pension money to your biggest donor. This is from the Toronto Star: "Mark Fuller, executive vice-president and general counsel for the board, said in an interview the MCN group is the only developer that has received financing during the last 18 months when the pension fund started considering such deals." So the only developer your biggest fundraiser chose to invest in happened to be the PC Party's biggest donor. Just Mario Cortellucci got the deal, and he just happens to have donated more than \$1 million to the Tories.

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: Let's return for a second here. I'm not arguing at all in terms of the accuracy of the documents tendered. What I am actually speaking about is the member's interpretation of the documents.

Let's look at the true facts here, if we can. First of all, the member yesterday indicated in the House that the fund lent Mr Cortellucci \$150 million. The fact is the actual loan is for \$36.3 million. However, in terms of accuracy—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Ready? The Chair recognizes the Chair of Management Board and Minister of Culture.

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: Unfortunately, what I hear from across the Liberal benches is that the facts are not necessary or relevant. They are, so let's look at the facts. The actual loan was \$36.3 million. It's fully secured, and it's not only secured by a fixed rate of return, but it also has an additional return based on a participation amount in the profits, so between 27% and 45%. So what has happened is the mortgages that are registered on title secure the entire amounts of not only the fixed rate of return but also the amounts that would be secured by the participation in the profits. The mortgages are also—

Interjections.

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: I'm trying to explain it to you folks.

The mortgages are also cross-collateralized, which means that all the properties are fully secured against

each other. So obviously, if you add up all the registered numbers it's a big number, but in fact the real loan is \$36.3 million, but secured by a far greater amount to ensure that security for the members of the pension plan.

Ms Pupatello: Minister, you're clearly missing the point of the question. Let me tell you what Mr Fuller at the Ontario Pension Board admitted yesterday. Mr Fuller said, "The MCN group is the only developer that has received financing during the last 18 months when the pension fund started to consider such deals." The board was not interested in these high-risks deals before these changes were made.

You have said repeatedly that the rules that govern the Ontario Pension Board have not changed since 1990. You said that yesterday. You're wrong; the policy did change. The executive vice-president confirmed that the policy changed after Mr Weiss arrived as chair, to allow loans to developers. Before Mr Weiss arrived, the OPB was only investing in low-risk real estate, like shopping malls. After your biggest fundraiser became the chair, he changed the policy and lent taxpayer-guaranteed pension funds to your biggest donor.

1410

Minister, will you now admit your top fundraiser changed the policies of the Ontario Pension Board to allow this deal with the top donor—

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: Let's put some real context again in terms of facts. First of all, the total assets of the fund are \$11.5 billion, of which the mortgage investments represent 0.3%.

According to Benefits Canada's annual review of the top 100 pension funds, the average is 1.7% investment in mortgages. Having said that, the actual document in terms of the policy reads, "To reduce risk and enhance expected returns, equity and fixed income investments may be allocated among the following different asset classes." In that class list is mortgages. This is the policy that was brought in by the board effective November 6, 1991. I will correct my record yesterday. I said 1990. That's the date on which they had the authority to bring in the policy. However, the policy was brought in on November 6, 1991, and it has not changed since in terms of mortgage investments.

SARS

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Health. Minister, nurses who have been dealing with the SARS crisis want a public inquiry which provides whistle-blower protection so that they can disclose to the public their concerns and their facts regarding why SARS has struck not once, but twice in Ontario. You and your Premier seem to want a backdoor review that will not have whistle-blower protection, that will not provide nurses with the guarantee they will not face discipline or some kind of re-priming when they come forward and tell their facts.

Thirty-two people have died. Hundreds have become ill. Thousands have been quarantined. Why are you so opposed to a public inquiry which provides nurses with whistle-blower protection so that they can tell the public of Ontario the real facts about what's happening?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I'm afraid the premise of the question is a bit incorrect. We on this side of the House do want a full, independent, open and transparent investigation of the facts to ensure we get information on the table. We believe in a publicly funded health care system that is accountable to the public. We think that's got to be one of the roots of the health care system, that makes it an accountable health care system.

When it comes to whistle-blower protection, I would say to any health worker, nurse or otherwise, that if there is evidence there is an employer who is intimidating or threatening a health worker, let us know because we will stop it right away. We will stop it. That is not to be allowed in our system. We will not allow it. Every health worker who is operating in the public interest should know that she or he has the protection of the government of Ontario when she or he is doing their job.

Mr Hampton: Nurses have raised the issue that we do not have adequate infection control in our hospitals. Nurses have raised the issue that you've been forced to recognize that because of cuts to the health care system, too many nurses are forced to work part-time jobs at two or three different hospitals. Hospitals, in trying to deal with SARS, have had to go out and hire temporary nurses at \$100 an hour. The medical officer of health for Toronto has said, "Because of the cuts, both on the public health side and the hospital side, we do not have any surge capacity." In other words, when something like SARS comes at us unexpectedly, there isn't the reserve in the system to deal with the crisis.

I repeat, 32 people have died. Hundreds are sick. Thousands have been quarantined. Minister, why won't you provide nurses with whistle-blower protection? Why will you not agree to a public process so they can tell people what's really happening in the health care system?

Hon Mr Clement: The answer to the question is that we are and we are. We are seeking to protect our nurses and other medical practitioners when it comes to whistle-blower protection. We are creating a public system of investigation and review of the situation to ensure that we get to the very answers that the honourable member is speaking of. I, as health minister, want answers to these questions as well.

We, as the public, deserve answers to these questions, and there should be a means by which we get to those answers. As the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, I will tell you that is the government's intention. I know the honourable member doesn't want to take yes for an answer, but yes is the answer to his question.

Mr Hampton: Minister, what you're proposing and what you don't want to be honest about with the public is really a backroom review. It is not something that would

be recorded in public. It would not provide whistle-blower protection for—

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Culture): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The honourable member made mention of honesty with respect to the minister. I don't think that's appropriate, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): I'm sorry. If there was, I didn't pick it up. If the member has something he would like to retract or apologize for, that's fine.

Mr Hampton: If the member over there has a problem, the issue is this: nurses want a public process that is on the record. We already know what happens in your government when a health care worker at the Sunnybrook cancer treatment centre goes public and mentions that there are some problems there. She's fired. And you did nothing.

We already saw what you tried to do around Walkerton. Your first proposal around Walkerton was to be not a public inquiry but a closed-door process there as well.

Minister, 32 people have died. Hundreds are ill. Thousands are in quarantine. Why will you and the Premier not agree to a public inquiry process that provides whistle-blower—

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Hon Mr Clement: I don't know half of what the honourable member is talking about, but I do know this: the Premier and I met with representatives of physicians and hospitals and nurses yesterday. We agreed that we needed accountability in our health care system. We agreed that it should not be a finger-pointing exercise. There was unanimity amongst all of the nurses who were represented there, all of the physicians, all of the hospitals represented there. We did not want a finger-pointing exercise. We wanted to get to the facts. We wanted to get to the truth. We wanted to ensure that mistakes that occurred do not happen again. That is our commitment as the Premier and the leader, as the Minister of Health and as the government of Ontario. That is our commitment. That is what we're working toward so that we do learn, we do understand and we make our health care system the very best that it can be.

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): To the Minister of Energy: for eight and a half years your government has been telling the people of Ontario that the Enrons and the Brascans, your private sector corporate friends, will supply us with sufficient electricity for our needs. Eight and a half years later, here we are: hydro bills have skyrocketed. Industries and businesses are laying off workers and curtailing production because they can't afford electricity. We face the prospect of electricity shortages in southern Ontario this summer. And what is your answer? Your answer is to spend \$100 million for temporary electricity generation. Minister, that amounts to a quarter of a million dollars

per megawatt for this summer. Is this your idea of a good private sector hydro deal for consumers, a million and a half dollars a megawatt?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): The Chair recognizes the Minister of Energy and chief government whip.

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. No, I'm no longer that last one.

I think what the people of the province of Ontario would like us to do would be to take reasonable precautions with respect to the adequate supply of electricity in the province of Ontario. What we came forward with is an insurance policy—and I think it's a prudent initiative—to ensure that we have enough supply in the event of harsh weather, which from time to time we have in Ontario. The plan, the proposal we put forward today could reach as much as 1% of the cost of electricity in the province of Ontario. But it also has the opportunity to save money with respect to the high cost of importing electricity in Ontario.

1420

Mr Hampton: A quarter of a million dollars per megawatt is just for the capital costs. That doesn't include paying for the natural gas and then putting it into production. Even the Minister of Finance said today that \$100 million is a lot of money. Even the Premier said he was surprised.

Do you know what, Minister? I looked at the fine print. The real problem we face is in the greater Toronto area this summer. There's not enough generation for the five million people in the greater Toronto area, and there's not enough transmission to get the generation in. What you announced today still doesn't answer that problem. This is your first touch on the panic button. I believe you're probably still going to have to put dirty diesel on line in the greater Toronto area.

The Deputy Speaker: Question?

Mr Hampton: Minister, when will you admit that your whole scheme of hydro privatization and deregulation that you and the Liberals welcomed so warmly is a disaster for Ontario, environmentally—

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. The Chair recognizes the Minister of Energy and deputy House leader.

Hon Mr Baird: Just because the leader of the third party stands in his place and says something doesn't mean it's true. If you look at what he's said day after day, he gets up on his feet and fearmongers and spreads fear across Ontario. He said just last week that these would be dirty diesel generators. That didn't happen. We're moving forward with a responsible, prudent initiative to ensure adequacy of supply in Ontario. I think the people of Ontario, whether they are residential customers, industrial customers or commercial customers, would expect the government to take reasonable precautions to ensure that we have adequacy of supply. But when this member sat in government, his response to backup generation was to bring in dirty diesel generation—500 megawatts of dirty diesel generation that he and his

cabinet colleagues approved in residential neighbourhoods.

The Deputy Speaker: Answer?

Hon Mr Baird: Would he stand up and apologize to the people of Ontario for that?

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Ms Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): I return my questioning to the Chair of the Management Board. The relationship of Chair of the Ontario Pension Board, Mr Weiss, with Mario Cortellucci goes back more than a decade. They worked together on fundraisers for the PC Party. So close were they that Mr Weiss was able to get more than half a million dollars to the party. I'm sure the two of them would consider themselves friends.

I have here a copy of the conflict-of-interest guidelines from your own ministry. These are the guidelines that apply to Mr Weiss in his role with the Ontario Pension Board—I don't know if you've read them since yesterday. They state: "A public servant shall not grant preferential treatment in relation to any official matter to any person, organization, family member or friend."

Mario Cortellucci was the only developer in the province to receive funds from the pension board. That's clearly preferential treatment. Can you tell me if Mr Weiss absented himself from any involvement in this deal?

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): I just want to remind you that after "Deferred Votes" it says "Oral Questions." It does not say "Conversation Period." We have a question, in case we forgot, from the member for Windsor West to the Chair of Management Board. For about a minute, we'd like to have an answer, if the rest of you can just put off those conversations until later on tonight.

The Chair recognizes the Chair of Management Board.

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Culture): Thank you, Speaker. I guess the key in all this is the fact that Mr Weiss used to be the executive director of the PC fund; I think that's key. "Ex"—he's no longer there; he has no conflict.

I will remind the member again that Mr Weiss appeared twice—not once, but twice—in front of the standing committee on government agencies which, I'll remind the member again, is an all-party committee chaired by the official opposition.

When Mr Weiss appeared before the committee, the finance critic for the Liberal Party, the member for Scarborough-Agincourt, said to him, "I have no doubts about your professional credentials." That's in Hansard, March 27, 2000. In fact, before going into the public service—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: No, no. That's exactly the way it should be done. You just keep on. That's not what I

want to interrupt. It's the ones who are yelling back and forth that I'm trying to stop.

Is everybody ready?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: I will remind the opposition that this policy is administered by a board. Also sitting on that board was a fellow by the name of William Fisher, who was appointed by the Peterson government. He just recently retired. However, he was there for three of the seven investments in question. Also on the board is Hugh Mackenzie, who was the active member of the United Steelworkers' union and former aide to former Premier Bob Rae, has been a member of the board since 1995 and continues to be there. So this is the board that administers it. If you want to make those allegations, step outside. I'm sure they'll be pleased to respond to those.

Ms Pupatello: Minister, the conflict-of-interest guidelines that apply to Don Weiss are quite clear. Let me read more.

"Public servants cannot fulfill this obligation simply by acting within the law," as suggested by the Minister of Finance yesterday. "The public servant must avoid being obligated or seeming to be obligated to any person or organization that might profit from special consideration."

Mr Weiss ran the PC Ontario fund while Mr Cortellucci was giving your party hundreds of thousands of dollars. Mr Weiss would certainly seem to carry an obligation to Mario Cortellucci, who made Weiss a hero to the cabinet that appointed him to the pension board. Mario Cortellucci, as the only developer to get money from Mr Weiss, has certainly profited from special consideration.

Minister, your biggest fundraiser lent pension money to only one man, your largest donor. Why don't you admit that this special deal between your largest fundraiser and your largest donor is a blatant violation of the conflict-of-interest guidelines?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: I will do no such thing. The heart of the matter here is not who was involved with the process but whether or not due process and due diligence were followed, and I'm assured that they were. That's the end of the story.

TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton): My question is to the Minister of Transportation. There's a great deal of concern amongst my constituents in the riding of Halton about the mid-peninsula expressway. There's a concerned citizens group that suggests that Bill 25 will lessen the requirement for a full environmental assessment on the four proposed routes crossing the escarpment area, and further, that the only time an environmental assessment would happen was during the actual construction phase. Minister, could you please respond to the concerns of many of my constituents?

Hon Frank Klees (Minister of Transportation): I am pleased to respond, and I did so yesterday as well with regard to Bill 25. I'm pleased to reassert this again. In fact, whether Bill 25 passes or does not will not in any

way change the environmental assessment process for the mid-peninsula corridor. In fact, if Bill 25 does pass, it will actually allow for more discussion of environmental issues than we have today. It does this by allowing the government to identify specific transportation corridors that would potentially be used, and these corridors can be miles in width. But what it allows the government to do is identify the potential transportation or transit corridors that could come under consideration. I made it very clear yesterday that in no way are environmental assessment processes compromised, and I want to say that I have instructed my staff to prepare an amendment that will make it very clear that this is in fact the case, so that even people like the member from across the way will be able to understand clearly and will not be able to mislead the people—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): I would rather you didn't use that word.

Mr Klees: I will withdraw that.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. I recognize the member for Halton.

1430

Mr Chudleigh: Thank you, Minister. The people of Halton will look forward to that.

The Niagara Escarpment is an important piece of Halton. It's a pristine piece of nature that runs through much of my riding. There is concern that Bill 25 will allow the mid-peninsula expressway to push through that Niagara Escarpment as opposed to going around it. Minister, could you comment as to whether there is any accuracy in these allegations?

Hon Mr Klees: Absolutely not one bit of accuracy in those statements whatsoever. In fact, my staff met with Mayor MacIsaac of Burlington earlier today, and he posed that question. We were able to clarify for the mayor that Bill 25 in no way affects the EA process that will be under consideration for the mid-peninsula corridor. We are, in fact, committed to the mid-pen—I want to reassert that—but I can also tell the member that any specific routing for that will be subject to a full environmental assessment process. The EA will be respected just as if Bill 25 had not been passed.

I want to say that we've arranged for a briefing for members of the opposition tomorrow morning.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Klees: I hope the member from Don Valley East is going to be in attendance, because he obviously does not understand this. So I trust that at tomorrow morning's briefing—about 10 o'clock—you'll be in attendance, along with any other member of the opposition who wants to learn the facts about the proposed Bill 25.

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): My question is to the Minister of Energy. "What's \$100 million?" says the Premier of Ontario. This Premier's arrogance and incomprehension as to the value of a dollar is matched only by his government's incompetence when it comes to

running the electricity system. You know that it is going to cost hundreds of millions of dollars to set up, sustain, dismantle and run these temporary generators during peak times at peak prices. You've had eight long years to manage the electricity supply crisis, and what do you have to show for it? An inquiry into your botch-up in the failed refurbishment of Pickering and a gaggle of temporary generators that will do nothing to deal with the long-term energy crisis in the province of Ontario.

I say to the minister: don't you think it's time to apologize to the people of Ontario for the crummy job you've done on electricity?

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs): I'm often asked by constituents, "Do you get advance notice of questions during question period?" I say, generally speaking, we don't get advance notice, but with the member opposite, I can see his lips moving during the previous question, so I know to anticipate a question.

The member opposite's attribution of comments to the Premier is not the case. He said no such thing. The member opposite talked about our installation of generators on a temporary basis. I think it's a reasonable precaution—an insurance policy, if you will, on behalf of enterprise, of hospitals, of residential customers in the province of Ontario.

The member opposite asked about the long-term issue. I did notice the Conference Board of Canada put forward a report today where it said, "The evidence demonstrates that overall net benefits are achieved in the long term." That's indeed what we're working on with respect to energy policy for the people of Ontario.

Mr Bryant: The minister says this is a prudent move. If this is so prudent, why wasn't this done last summer? You had the same forecast last summer. If this is so prudent, why didn't you do it last winter? We all know why in this House: because you have a political re-election campaign going on. It is bad enough that the people of Ontario have to pay for the government's incompetence with respect to managing the electricity system, but it is downright offensive that we have to spend hundreds of millions of dollars in brownout insurance to make sure that Ernie Eves and the PC Party don't have a political blackout this summer.

I say to the Minister: you seem to be indignant about the question, but, seriously, if this is so prudent, and this insurance is so necessary, why didn't you do it last summer? The difference is that your political keister is on the line now and the taxpayers are stuck with the cost of this extraordinarily offensive political blackout insurance.

Hon Mr Baird: We're taking some reasonable precautions to ensure the adequacy of supply. We're pleased with the fact that there are 1,300 new megawatts that weren't available last summer that are already on-line today, all with no or low emission. That's good, clean energy for the people of the province of Ontario. We're pleased that in the coming weeks we'll see an additional 750, going to 1,500, megawatts of new, clean, non-

emission electricity in the province of Ontario. That'll be good for prices and supply.

The member opposite talks about eight and a half years of energy policy. I was pleased that his party was able to support in principle our Bill 35, reorganizing the electricity system. I was pleased again that the Liberal Party was able to support Bill 210 last fall, endorsing the two major pieces of legislation of the energy policy of this government.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): My question today is for the Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Every member of this House knows how important it is to meet the long-term-care needs of Ontario's growing and aging population. It's the Ernie Eves government, more than any other caucus on the floor of this House, that is truly committed to improving the quality of life for seniors across Ontario.

Just last week, Premier Eves reaffirmed our government's commitment in the 2003 budget speech to increase annual funding for long-term care in Ontario by \$100 million. I understand that \$100 million doesn't include one penny of federal Liberal money. I would appreciate it if you could inform my constituents in Simcoe North and Simcoe county and people across the province of Ontario about how this funding will mean even better care for Ontario seniors and others who require long-term care in our province.

Hon Dan Newman (Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I want to thank the honourable member for Simcoe North for his question. The Ernie Eves government has made unprecedented investments for long-term care in Ontario. This includes \$100 million in new annual funding for long-term care that was announced in this year's budget and reaffirmed by the Premier last Thursday.

I want to add that this funding is in addition to last year's \$100-million investment in even better nursing and personal care. It means that we have delivered \$200 million in new funding for long-term care in less than one year. These are real dollars that will make a real difference for residents in Ontario's long-term-care facilities.

Total funding for long-term care in Ontario for the year 2003-04 will be a staggering \$2.1 billion. This is a level of funding for long-term care that has never, ever, been seen in our province's history—certainly not under any Liberal government and certainly not under any NDP government. The Ernie Eves government takes our responsibility for Ontario's seniors seriously, and that's why we provide the resources to provide the care that our seniors deserve.

Mr Dunlop: I'd like to thank the associate minister for that response. I'm very pleased to hear that our government, unlike previous governments, has continued to invest in long-term care and to maintain a strong sense

of commitment to seniors and others to meet long-term-care needs.

At this time I'd also like to thank the previous Ministers of Health for their commitments to long-term-care facilities. Right in the county of Simcoe we've got new facilities in Midland, Orillia, Barrie, Bradford, Alliston and Collingwood. We're very pleased at how those facilities have turned out to meet the needs of our seniors.

I'd like to ask the associate minister what the response of long-term-care stakeholders has been to date about the \$100 million announcement in this year's budget. Long-term care matters to the people of Simcoe North. I know that my constituents would like to know what others are saying about this very significant investment.

Hon Mr Newman: I again want to thank the honourable member of Simcoe North for his question. I'm proud to say that our stakeholders have been very pleased with last week's \$100-million announcement. In fact, the Ontario Long Term Care Association called the funding increase "an important step toward enhancing the quality of life for long-term-care residents," and that "homes will be better able to meet increasing resident dietary, care and programming needs."

Karen Sullivan, the executive director of the Ontario Long Term Care Association, said the \$100 million in new funding means that the sector and the Ernie Eves government "can now continue to build on the momentum established in the past two years."

I say today that this is a momentum that was non-existent under the Liberal and NDP governments.

The Ontario Association for Non-Profit Homes and Services for Seniors also expressed their support for the \$100 million in new annual funding. Donna Rubin, the association's chief executive officer, said that OANHSS is "encouraged that the government is taking steps to address our funding issues, and we look forward to continuing to work with them to benefit residents."

The Ernie Eves government also—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Thank you.

1440

ONTARIO NORTHLAND RAILWAY

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): My question is for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. Minister, we learned with interest just yesterday that the Canadian National Railway has now announced that it will not be moving forward with its intended purchase of the Ontario Northland Railway. Quite frankly, that's good news for northern Ontario. We believe, as New Democrats, that Ontario Northland should stay in public hands in order to serve the people of the north. Now that CN has backed out of the negotiations with Ontario Northland, would you categorically say in this House today that your government is retreating on its planned privatization of the ONR?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): I think the news that this government fully lived up to the commitment that Premier Eves made in April 2002 and that my colleague AL McDonald made on behalf of the people of northeastern Ontario, that this government would fully protect the jobs of the workers at the ONR, was well received right across the north yesterday. In fact, there was a headline in the North Bay Nugget that the government kept its word. Phil Koning, president of the ONR General Chairpersons Association, said, "AL has kept his word, that preserving jobs was the number one issue."

We're very proud of how we negotiated on behalf of the people of northeastern Ontario and those jobs. It's a shame that CN, such a large multinational, couldn't find work in other parts of Canada or the United States and move that work to North Bay to keep those jobs and fulfill the government's commitment. This is a very valuable piece of real estate, and that multinational should have given us a better deal on behalf of the workers in northeastern Ontario.

Mr Bisson: Minister, we should call you the minister of confusion, because the people of northeastern Ontario are still where they were two years ago. We have no idea what your plans are for the ONR. I asked you a simple question: will your government retreat on the planned sale of the Ontario Northland Railway to whatever private sector entity? The question to you is very simple: will the government back down on its planned privatization of the ONR? Yes or no?

Hon Mr Wilson: I know the honourable member and the Liberals will be interested that North Bay councillor George Maroosis said the following about the news yesterday: "It's tremendous news ... they"—the provincial government—"did the right thing." Again, I quoted Phil Koning. Also, the North Bay Nugget reported yesterday that, "Councillors commended the province, particularly Nipissing MPP AL McDonald, for not wavering from the service improvement plan's six objectives, including protecting employment, fostering jobs growth and enhancing service levels."

The money that Ontario taxpayers put into this railway every year in terms of subsidy—and, by the way, I can't name a railway in North America that doesn't receive some degree of subsidy from the taxpayers—is worth every penny, northerners are worth every penny, and if the honourable member has a problem with that, I'll see you on the campaign trail, because we're standing by the workers of northeastern Ontario.

Mr Bisson: Mr Speaker, on a point of order: I want to file a notice of dissatisfaction on—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): If you're going to do that, do it in the right way.

ADAMS MINE

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming-Cochrane): I have a question for the Deputy Premier. It was 27 days ago that I asked you a question about the dirty land deal

that your government struck with Mario Cortellucci to buy the crown lands surrounding the Adams mine. You were prepared to sell the land to Mr Cortellucci, the biggest contributor to the PC Party, for just about \$22 an acre, without any tender or public notice.

Minister, 27 days ago you said there was a review of the deal underway and that the details of that review would be made public, in your words, in the very near future. This was about a public secret deal that benefited the biggest donor to your party. It has been a month and the review has not been released by anybody in your government. Why did you break your word, and why do you continue to cover up the details of this sleazy land deal?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Deputy Premier, Minister of Education): I would refer the question to Minister Ouellette, who has always been prepared to share the information.

Hon Jerry J. Ouellette (Minister of Natural Resources): Quite clearly we receive requests for crown land annually, in the number of thousands. Each decision is made at a district level, where the decision is made upon the individual merits of each unique case. The MNR staff look at the social, environmental and economic factors in each of these decisions. This was done in 1998. There has been no backroom deal or anything. Everything was very clear at that specific time and well above board.

Mr Ramsay: In 1998, when the EA review was going on, the Adams mine was half the amount of land that you're discussing now.

The Premier wrote to one of my constituents on April 22 that he had passed on to you her letter to him to report back to her as to the status of the review. You still haven't done it, and it's a month and a half later.

Minister, you knew full well that this review was going to take some time since at least last April. It's at least two months now that you've been looking at this deal and still have not released the details. The fact is that you wanted to keep this deal secret and you still do. You didn't want the public to know that your government is making a secret land deal, another one, with your top donor, Mario Cortellucci. Like the other one, this deal stinks. Rather than looking out for Ontario taxpayers, you're looking out for yourselves and your friends, and your top donor, again, is getting a dirty-little-secret land deal.

Will you agree today to release the details of this deal so that we can see who you've been talking to, who you've been consulting with and whether you're going to go forward on this or not?

Hon Mr Ouellette: Very clearly, even in the member's own question, he mentioned the fact that the EA process took place in 1998. This is far above board. It's well within all the processes and guidelines, and the ministry is ensuring that it is in full compliance with all those specific details. This is clearly a standard process, and what the member is asking us to do is to not look at

the individual cases but to start to make political decisions, which we will not do on this side of the House.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): I have four people standing between me and the person who wanted to get my attention. We seem to be easy today, so we'll just wait until they get out of my way and then I'll recognize the member for Scarborough Centre

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): My question is for the Minister of Consumer and Business Services. When our province was facing serious economic impact from the SARS outbreak, the Ernie Eves government took very strong action. The Premier developed an aggressive plan to tackle the impact of SARS on our economy, a plan that included a \$118-million tourism recovery plan to rebuild confidence in Toronto and Ontario as world-class destinations—I know that certain members across the way will appreciate that, especially in terms of certain parades—\$10 million for an international investment in a business confidence recovery strategy and a provincial tax exemption for all admissions and accommodations taxes throughout the province from May 1 to September 30, 2003.

Interjections.

Ms Mushinski: Mr Speaker, I do recognize that obviously the Liberals are not interested in economic recovery, but I know that we on this side of the House are.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): The member from Don Valley East, come to order.

Ms Mushinski: Unfortunately, while the government was working very hard to develop a strong plan to deal with the effects of SARS, shady characters were thinking up ways to take advantage of people's fears. Minister, can you please tell this House what the government has done—I know the Liberals aren't interested.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. The Chair recognizes the member from Scarborough Centre.

Ms Mushinski: Minister, can you please tell me what this government has done to protect Ontarians from these types of scams?

1450

Hon Tim Hudak (Minister of Consumer and Business Services): I can assure the member and the House that the Ernie Eves government does not tolerate scam artists capitalizing on the public's fear about SARS. In fact, under provincial law it is illegal for companies to pitch miracle cures that they know are untrue. In these circumstances, to best enforce our laws, particularly when scam artists are using the Internet, we team up with other jurisdictions across North America that have similarly strong consumer protection laws.

During the first week of May, we partnered with the US Federal Trade Commission and the US Food and Drug Administration in a surf-and-sweep exercise and

picked up 44 different Web sites that were making false and misleading claims. In fact, one Web site said that not only did it have a cure for SARS but it could also help to fight terrorism. Together with these other jurisdictions, we're shutting these scams down.

Ms Mushinski: I appreciate that response. I think it's particularly reassuring to see that we're taking a very thorough approach, in partnership with US authorities, to tackle the SARS outbreak we're facing. Clearly this is what you can expect from a government with the type of experienced leadership that Ernie Eves offers.

Minister, partnering in an international surf-and-sweep sounds like a very innovative way to crack down on these shady actors. There's no question we're seeing more and more on-line scam artists migrate to the Internet, because it's so easy to hide on the information highway. That must make it even tougher for law enforcement to put an end to these scams. I'm wondering if you can tell us what you are doing to shut down these scammers.

Hon Mr Hudak: Again, I appreciate the member's concern to help shut down these reprehensible tactics. As I mentioned, either through surf-and-sweep initiatives or being alerted by vigilant consumers, we contact these sites and tell them to stop. If they continue to mislead customers, they may be forced to shut down and could face serious fines and even jail time under provincial legislation. In fact, I'm pleased to say that the one Ontario site we found is no longer a problem.

Last September, we conducted a similar surf-and-sweep on credit repair and loan scams. We followed up investigations that resulted in two charges being laid under Ontario law. The Speaker probably knows that presently a company that engages in this type of misleading activity can be fined up to \$100,000. Individuals can also receive up to one year in jail. Our new consumer protection legislation will more than double the fines to \$250,000 and maximum jail sentences to two years less a day. To answer the question directly, we're shutting these scam artists down.

LAND DEVELOPMENT

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): My question is to the Deputy Premier. Your government is currently negotiating the largest land swap in Ontario history with developers who were speculating on land in the Oak Ridges moraine. One of these speculators, your top donor, Mario Cortellucci, made a surprise purchase of a huge swath of land on the moraine in Uxbridge in 2001. It was a surprise because the property he bought was mired in OMB hearings and had been unanimously rejected for development by Uxbridge council. Durham regional council says you can't develop it, and this land was also in a development freeze by your provincial government, yet Mr Cortellucci still bought the land.

Guess what? Do you know what's happening now? Mr Cortellucci, your biggest donor, is going to get thousands of acres of provincially owned land in Seaton for buying

land that couldn't be developed in Uxbridge. How can you justify this, Minister?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Deputy Premier, Minister of Education): I'm going to refer the question to the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Hon David Young (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I thank the member for the question. I must say I am puzzled and disappointed by the premise. The Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act, which received support from members on all sides of the assembly, quite frankly, will protect some of the most sensitive pieces of land in this province. It is true that what has occurred is really precedent-setting. Never before has anything even close to this happened in this province.

What's happened is that we have reached a meeting of the minds between environmentalists, between land developers, between municipal officials. There is an exchange of some of the most environmentally important and sensitive land in the province. The owners have agreed to that. It is being overseen by individuals, including, I should say, Mr Crombie, who viewed this, and a commissioner of fairness is looking at it. This is what the agreement specifies. This is what is going to happen.

Mr Colle: This is incredible. Your biggest campaign donor gives you guys a million bucks. All of a sudden the land is frozen, can't be developed at Uxbridge. He buys this land, and people said, "You're crazy, Mr Cortellucci. Why would you buy this land? It's frozen. You can't do anything with it. It's useless." Yet I guess Mr Cortellucci knew something, because after he buys the land, lo and behold, guess what happens? He's told he's going to get thousands of acres of public provincial land in Seaton given to him for buying land that was worthless. How is this fair to the taxpayers of Ontario? Justify that.

Hon Mr Young: The question would actually have more merit if it wasn't predicated upon fantasy.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Order.

Hon Mr Young: The question would actually be more interesting and worthy of more comment if it wasn't predicated on what one might describe as fanciful allegations. The lands that he refers to as being worthless are anything but. They were lands that were the subject of review by individuals—impartial individuals, independent individuals. What was decided is that there would be an exchange of those environmentally sensitive lands.

In order to ensure that the Oak Ridges moraine deal—a deal that, quite frankly, everyone in this Legislative Assembly approved of—was done and done properly, we went so far recently as to pass a ministerial zoning order. I signed the order to make sure the land in Pickering that was agricultural land remained agricultural land. I note that the Liberal candidate in that very area suggests that we should not have done that, that that land should have been developed.

Interjections.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr

Speaker: I seek unanimous consent to limit the division bells to five minutes in the case of any division relating to government notice of motion number 28 and that the time for debate be apportioned as follows: 40 minutes for the government, 60 minutes each for the official opposition and the third party.

The Deputy Speaker: Is there consent? Agreed? It is agreed.

1500

PETITIONS

NEWBORN SCREENING

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): "Whereas many infants and young children unknowingly suffer from medium chain ACYL-COA dehydrogenase deficiency MCAD, which may be the cause of one out of 100 infant deaths thought to be SIDS or Reye's;

"Whereas families in Ontario are aware of the importance of expanding their newborn screening of fatty oxidation disorders (FOD) and other metabolic disorders that can be detected through tandem mass spectrometry which is currently conducted in three other provinces in Canada;

"Whereas the sample taken at birth for PKU testing is the same sample that can be used for FOD and other disorders;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To mandate supplemental newborn screening in the province of Ontario."

I am pleased to affix my signature along with those of 2,000 of my constituents who have signed this petition.

HIGHWAY 407

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): The Chair recognizes the member for Durham.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): Thank you, Speaker. It's a pleasure to see you in the House today and in the chair as well.

On behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham, I'm pleased to support a petition as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the timely and efficient movement of people and products is crucial to the success of the Ontario economy;

"Whereas the province of Ontario is meeting the challenge of traffic congestion in the greater Toronto area by improvements to our highway networks and by improved public transportation;

"Whereas the further construction of Highway 407 eastward into the Durham region would improve the flow of traffic in Durham region and throughout the GTA;

"Whereas the citizens and municipalities of Durham region have faced uncertainty over the final alignment of

the proposed 407 highway for many years and are entitled to a timely resolution to this matter;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Parliament of Ontario take" the necessary "steps to fast-track the extension of Highway 407 eastward, into the regional municipality of Durham, while ensuring that all the necessary environmental assessments and public" consultation processes are followed to the letter.

I'm pleased to endorse and support this petition.

HYDRO RATES

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Harris-Eves government has mismanaged the electricity policy of the province of Ontario;

"Whereas last fall the McGuinty Liberal call for rebates, although fiercely rejected by the government, gained huge public support. With no options open, the government introduced and passed a plan to rebate \$75 to customers and place a cap on electricity commodity prices at .043 per kilowatt hour;

"Whereas Mike Brown, MPP, has been fighting for rural rate assistance;

"Whereas the Ernie Eves government forces Great Lakes Power customers to pay into a fund for rural rate assistance; and

"Whereas rural rate assistance would reduce the distribution bills for customers by hundreds of dollars each year;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, support the efforts of Mike Brown, MPP, to have rural rate assistance extended into the GLP service area immediately."

This particular group of petitions is signed by many people from Dubreuilville and Wawa.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): I have a petition.

"To: The Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"From: Lakehead University Student Union, Local 32, Canadian Federation of Students.

"Whereas average tuition fees in Ontario are the second-highest in Canada; and

"Whereas average undergraduate tuition fees in Ontario have more than doubled in the past 10 years; and

"Whereas tuition fees for deregulated programs have, in certain cases, doubled and tripled; and

"Whereas Statistics Canada has documented a link between increasing tuition fees and diminishing access to post-secondary education; and

"Whereas four other provincial governments have taken a leadership role by freezing and reducing tuition fees;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

"Freeze tuition fees for all programs at their current levels, and

"Take steps to reduce the tuition fees of all graduate programs, post-diploma programs and professional programs for which tuition fees have been deregulated since 1998."

I support this entirely and am very happy to add my name to the petition.

OAK RIDGES MORaine

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Further petitions? The Chair recognizes the member for Durham.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): Thank you, Mr Speaker. You weren't looking at me, so I wasn't aware. I wasn't paying attention, I suppose.

It's my pleasure to present a petition on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Oak Ridges moraine is an ecological treasure that warrants protection and careful stewardship now and into future generations; and

"Whereas the province of Ontario has recognized the importance of the moraine with the passage of the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act, 2001, to protect natural and water resources, preserve agricultural land and provide clarity on where development can and cannot occur; and

"Whereas the act has resulted in certain limitations on citizens' use of their own property within the moraine;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Parliament of Ontario take action to ensure there are no undue restrictions on Oak Ridges moraine residents making minor improvements to their homes and property; and

"That the province of Ontario work" co-operatively "with municipalities and landowners to ensure the interpretation and enforcement of the act continues to fully protect the moraine while also giving residents the right to fair and reasonable enjoyment of their" personal "property."

I'm pleased to support it by signing this petition.

SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas some motorists are recklessly endangering the lives of children by not obeying the highway traffic law requiring them to stop for school buses with their warning lights activated;

"Whereas the current law has no teeth to protect the children who ride the school buses of Ontario, and who are at risk and their safety is in jeopardy;

"Whereas the current school bus law is difficult to enforce, since not only is the licence plate number re-

quired but positive identification of the driver and vehicle as well, which makes it extremely difficult to obtain a conviction;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the measures contained in private member's bill An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to protect children while on school buses, presented by Pat Hoy, MPP, Chatham-Kent Essex, be immediately enacted....

"The bill would impose liability on the owner of a vehicle that fails to stop for a school bus that has its overhead red signal lights flashing....

"We ask for the support of all members of the Legislature."

I have signed this petitions, as have other persons from the region of Ottawa.

MINIMUM WAGE

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): I have a further petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario with respect to minimum wages, which I'd like to read.

"To the Ontario provincial Legislature:

"Because the minimum wage has been frozen at \$6.85 since 1995 despite increases in the cost of living; and

"Because a full-time worker earning the current minimum wage ... is \$5,904 below the poverty line, and to reach the poverty line would need an hourly wage of at least \$10 an hour;

"Because the minimum wage should provide people" with their right to shelter and good food;

"Because typical minimum age earners are women, students and people of colour, groups who are already being impoverished in our economic system;

"We demand that the Ontario government immediately increase the minimum wage to at least the poverty line." That means \$10 per hour.

It's signed by a number of petitioners, and I will affix my signature to it.

HOME CARE

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas well-managed and adequately funded home health care is a growing need in our community; and

"Whereas the provincial government has frozen community care access centre budgets, which has meant dramatic cuts to service agency funding and services to vulnerable citizens as well as shortened visits by front-line workers; and

"Whereas these dramatic cuts, combined with the increased complexity of care for those who do qualify for home care, has led to an impossible cost burden to home care agencies; and

"Whereas the wages and benefits received by home care workers employed by home care agencies are well

below the wages and benefits of workers doing comparable jobs in institutional settings; and

"Whereas front-line staff are also required to subsidize the home care program in our community by being responsible for paying for their own gas and for vehicle maintenance; and

"Whereas other CCACs and CCAC-funded agencies across the province compensate their staff between 29 cents and 42.7 cents per kilometre; and

"Whereas CCAC-funded agency staff in our own community are paid 26 cents per kilometre, with driving time considered 'hours worked';

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows: to act now to increase funding to the CCAC of Kingston, Frontenac, Lennox and Addington in order for it to adequately fund service agencies so they can fairly compensate front-line workers."

I will affix my signature to this petition as I am in full agreement.

1510

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Further petitions? The Chair recognizes the member for Timmins-James Bay.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. Congratulations on your opportunity to preside over our question period today.

I have a petition here circulated again by Shirley Crispin, who has been all over our community with petitions on a number of issues. She's asked me to present this particular petition, which reads:

"To the Ontario provincial Legislature:

"Because social assistance rates were slashed by 21.6% in 1995 and, with the increases to the cost of living, that cut is worth about 34.4% today; and

"Because current social assistance rates do not allow recipients to meet their cost of living; and

"Because the people of Ontario deserve an adequate standard of living and are guaranteed such by the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; and

"Because the jury at the inquest into the death of Kimberly Rogers recommended that social assistance rates be reviewed so that they reflect actual costs of living;

"We demand that the Ontario government immediately increase the shelter portion of Ontario Works and Ontario disability support program benefits to the average Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp rent levels and index social assistance to the cost of living."

I've signed that petition.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Health Canada approved Visudyne on June 1, 2000, as a therapy for the treatment of wet form age-related macular degeneration; and

"Whereas clinical trials have demonstrated that this treatment safely and effectively stabilizes vision loss in 67% of patients and improves visual acuity in 13% of patients; and

"Whereas patients requiring therapy using Visudyne face a cost of \$1,750 for the drug and \$750 for the clinician procedural fees each time therapy is administered, and to complete a full therapy cycle, a patient would be required to pay \$15,000 to preserve his or her sight; and

"Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Health in May of 2002 announced a Visudyne funding criteria that is not retroactive to June 1, 2000, and effectively excludes 80% to 90% of all eligible patients who suffer from macular degeneration;

"Be it resolved that the Ontario Ministry of Health immediately change its unfair restrictions on macular degeneration patients and reimburse those patients who have used their own financial resources to receive this vital treatment."

I affix my signature. I am in complete agreement.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): I have a further petition from the Ontario College of Arts and Design Student Union, Local 25 of the Canadian Federation of Students. It's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. The petition is with respect to "Freeze Tuition Fees.

"Whereas average tuition fees in Ontario are the second-highest in Canada; and

"Whereas average undergraduate tuition fees in Ontario have more than doubled in the past 10 years; and

"Whereas tuition fees for deregulated programs have, in certain cases, doubled and tripled; and

"Whereas Statistics Canada has documented a link between increasing tuition fees and diminishing access to post-secondary education; and

"Whereas four other provincial governments have taken a leadership role by freezing and reducing tuition fees;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

"Freeze tuition fees for all programs at their current levels, and

"Take steps to reduce the tuition fees of all graduate programs, post-diploma programs and professional programs for which tuition fees have been deregulated since 1998."

I affix my signature to it.

NIAGARA HOSPITALS

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the board of trustees for the Niagara Health System and the Hotel Dieu Hospital have unanimously endorsed a plan to construct a new general hospital and regional cancer centre and new Hotel Dieu Hospital on existing Hotel Dieu property in St Catharines; and

"Whereas the proposed new hospitals would replace currently insufficient facilities and improve the quality of health care in St Catharines and throughout the region of Niagara; and

"Whereas the proposal will streamline operations and save an estimated \$10 million annually; and

"Whereas health care professionals in Niagara support the proposal of the Niagara Health System; and

"Whereas the construction of two new hospitals would attract new health care professionals to Niagara to help alleviate the shortage of medical professionals the Niagara region is currently experiencing;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the Ontario Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to immediately support the proposal of the Niagara Health System for the construction of two new hospitals in St Catharines on the existing Hotel Dieu property and provide the appropriate funding to make this project a reality."

I affix my signature; I'm in agreement.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SARS

Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I move government notice of motion 28:

To recognize that Ontario's front-line health care workers, including nurses, doctors, public health officials, paramedics, lab technicians and scientists, have made heroic efforts to combat SARS;

To recognize that Ontario has suffered tremendous economic consequences of the SARS outbreak;

To recognize that the federal government has not yet provided much-needed financial assistance to front-line health care workers who have worked so tirelessly to contain the outbreak and treat its victims;

The Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario, on behalf of the people of Ontario:

Calls on the federal government to provide immediately financial assistance to cover exceptional health care costs borne by health care facilities in fighting SARS;

Calls on the federal government to commit immediately to ongoing funding to improve measures to track infectious diseases, to provide a rapid response team for future outbreaks and to increase community awareness programs on infectious diseases; and

Calls on the federal government to live up to its responsibilities, like the Ontario government has, and

provide, without delay, financial assistance to those so keenly affected by SARS in Ontario.

I'll be splitting my time with the Minister of Health, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and the Minister of Tourism and Recreation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Let the debate begin.

1520

Hon Mr Eves: Over the past weeks, the battle against SARS has had a profound and unprecedented impact on our province. Our prayers are with the families of those who have lost their lives to this deadly disease. Our support goes out to those who have become ill, and we fervently hope that they make a rapid recovery.

The struggle against SARS has many heroes. Our front-line health care workers have laboured tirelessly with enormous skill and dedication to contain the outbreak. Our hospitals and other health facilities have done whatever necessary to treat and prevent the spread of this dangerous disease.

We continue to place our faith in the remarkable courage and professionalism of Ontario's nurses, doctors, paramedics, public health experts, lab technicians, scientists and other health care workers. To them, I have a very simple message from the hearts of all Ontarians: thank you.

To acknowledge and support these heroes, I call upon all members of the Legislative Assembly to endorse the resolution I tabled last week.

Without a doubt, we all agree that Ontario today faces no greater challenge than defeating SARS and overcoming its extensive impact. In late April, I announced a comprehensive SARS assistance and recovery strategy. I said we would do whatever it takes to help the people of Toronto and Ontario to overcome this adversity.

To support this strategy, this House unanimously passed Bill 1, the SARS Assistance and Recovery Strategy Act. The bill protects the jobs of people affected by SARS-related personal illness, quarantine or isolation. People should not lose their livelihood for doing the right thing. The legislation also strengthens current powers to curb the spread of SARS and other infectious diseases. The changes help to ensure that health officials and front-line health care workers have the tools necessary to meet their evolving needs during the SARS outbreak and beyond.

As part of our plan, our government is providing emergency funding to help hospitals move forward with priority treatments and reduce wait times due to SARS precautions.

We have launched a two-year tourism recovery strategy to rebuild global confidence in Toronto and Ontario as world-class travel destinations. Projected costs total more than \$128 million, including participation by the three levels of government. We also pledged \$10 million for a complementary strategy to revive international investment and business confidence.

Bill 1 gave the hard-hit tourism sector a boost by exempting accommodations and admissions to places of

amusement across the province from retail sales tax from May 1 to September 30 this year.

Last week the government took the next steps in delivering on our commitment to do whatever it takes, through a \$720-million SARS assistance package for health care workers, facilities and municipal emergency services. Of this amount, up to \$190 million will be used to reimburse eligible health care employees and physicians for income lost due to SARS. This financial assistance will remain available until June 30 this year and will be extended if need be. This financial help expresses our deep appreciation to those who have made, and in some cases continue to make, extraordinary personal sacrifices for the benefit of our community.

We are also making good on the costs hospitals and other health care facilities have borne in fighting this unprecedented battle, such as for supplies, equipment and extra personnel. Approximately \$400 million has been allotted to date for this purpose.

We are, as well, investing \$120 million to strengthen the public health system to deal with the "new normal" environment we find ourselves in. These measures include strengthening infectious disease tracking systems and reinforcing public health; rapid response teams for future outbreaks; a community awareness program on infectious disease; a modern information system linking all 37 public health units in the province; a volunteer registry of staff willing to assist in disease outbreaks; and funding for SARS-related research.

In addition, the government will cover up to 100% of the extraordinary costs, estimated at more than \$10 million, incurred by greater Toronto area municipalities and Simcoe county as a direct result of SARS. An immediate payment of \$2 million is being made to the city of Toronto. The government is also covering extraordinary costs incurred by volunteer organizations such as the Red Cross, St John's Ambulance and the Salvation Army in helping people with SARS.

Let me say once again that our government is determined to do whatever it takes to move Toronto and Ontario along the road to recovery.

As part of our recovery plan, I met with representatives from the nurses' associations—the RNAO, the ONA and the Ontario College of Nurses—yesterday. There were also representatives of the Ontario Medical Association, the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario and the Ontario Hospital Association in attendance. We all agreed that there should be a public process to review the way SARS has been handled. We also agreed that the process cannot interfere with the fight health care professionals are waging right now.

Today, I call on this House to confirm, on behalf of the people of Ontario, that it shares this commitment unequivocally. I urge all members to dedicate the necessary resources of this province to fight the spread of the SARS virus. I call on the House to commit to compensation for people who have lost wages because they were asked to go into isolation to protect the health of others. I ask the members to join in our pledge to fund all extra-

ordinary expenses incurred by hospitals and health care facilities relating to SARS.

I call on the House to support the effort to rebuild global confidence in Toronto by aggressively promoting the city of Toronto and the province of Ontario as safe, vibrant, exciting places to work, live, invest and visit.

We are doing what we can to help, but we need the support and resources of the federal government as well. Last week I wrote to the Prime Minister of Canada to remind him that the federal government also has a responsibility to lend a hand in this hour of need. It is vital that Ontario speak with one voice in pressing Ottawa to provide the assistance our province is entitled to and urgently needs. It is necessary for the federal government not only to act but to act quickly.

I therefore urge all members of the House to join me in calling on the government of Canada to treat the outbreak of SARS on the same basis as a natural disaster and to provide funding in accordance with the federal disaster financial assistance arrangements program.

Now is the time for unity for the people of Ontario: to grieve together for this tragic loss of life; to salute the heroic efforts of our front-line public health and hospital workers; and to respond to the enormous economic impact of this outbreak.

Ontarians are pulling together as never before, and I am confident that our province will recover from this challenge and emerge stronger and better than ever.

In the spirit of non-partisanship, I urge all members of the House to unite in an all-out effort to contain and defeat this disease and to rebound from its consequences. The people of Ontario deserve nothing less.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

1530

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I want to speak today about how our province has come together. Our government, medical professionals and individuals living across this great province of ours have come together in a united fight against SARS.

When we, as a province, were introduced to the potentially devastating impact of SARS, we didn't have a lot of time to work out the overarching strategy; we had to act. We had to protect each individual, each Ontarian, from a previously unknown but deadly disease. I'm proud to say that our government and our province's 37 public health units, working in collaboration with our EMS workers, public health officials, doctors, nurses, other medical practitioners, hospital long-term-care and community care workers, did precisely that.

It was just over 11 weeks ago that we notified the public of the outbreak of a potentially communicable disease. I remember the day so well. It will be etched in my memory forever. We hadn't heard of the word SARS at that point. At the time, we called it cases of atypical pneumonia. But SARS is the word that we know so well now, much to our grief.

At the time, there was no road map to follow, no precedent in place to provide the guidelines on exactly

the next steps to take. We had to rely on the details that emerged every day about SARS: about its potential origin, about how it was being transmitted, and about the precautions that could potentially save people's lives. And we learned; we were educated. Essentially, we were learning as we were experiencing, and as our province's public health units learned more about SARS, we communicated this knowledge to the public as quickly as possible, and indeed in real time.

I asked my staff today to count the number of SARS briefings and public conferences that occurred. To date, there have been over 35. So we were there to equip Ontarians with the knowledge they needed to make educated decisions and to learn exactly what was happening in our communities. As we discovered the nature of the symptoms, the period of incubation and the possible origins of transmission, we shared that information directly with health care professionals across this province, with people from around the world, and of course in every household in Ontario. As we move forward, we continue to provide that information to Ontarians: the means to learn about the new threats and the measures that could be used to contain SARS, to essentially help us help Ontarians save lives.

We're confident that we have found the way to defeat this terrible illness. We know that it involves infection control. We know that it involves the right kind of epidemiological spadework to establish the epidemiological link. We know that in some cases it involves quarantine. We know that we have the best and the brightest health care professionals: our wonderful doctors, nurses, medical practitioners, researchers, epidemiologists and EMS workers working together in our publicly funded health care system, communicating with one another in real time and with experts from around the world. That is how we are sharing new information and getting the best techniques employed to defeat this disease.

As a government, we moved quickly as well. At the onset, by regulation, we made SARS a reportable virulent and communicable disease, a regulation that gives public health officials the power they needed to assist in the stopping of SARS.

Then we went further. When Premier Eves declared a state of emergency back on March 26, we gave ourselves the power to protect the health, safety and welfare of Ontario residents. We activated the provincial operations centre for the first time. We monitored SARS-related activity 24 hours a day, seven days a week. We followed up with a broad sweep of people who had come in contact with SARS cases to assess their health and determine if they were showing any symptoms. We developed a plan to increase Ontario's isolation bed capacity, potentially using new, unopened facilities as a way to isolate patients with symptoms, and we continued to impose restrictions on certain health care settings.

Those methods proved to be extremely successful. There were no shortcuts. I wished we had a magic wand some days just to wave the problem away, but it took good, old-fashioned hard work, a lot of detective sleuth-

ing when it came to establishing the epidemiological links, and, unfortunately, a great degree of discomfort for our health care workers who endured it, endured it, endured it, hour in, hour out, day in, day out, to allow us the opportunity to protect the public, to make sure that some very sick patients got better and to ensure that we did not have community spread.

As the Premier has indicated, we did not stop there. We knew the impact that this was having on our health care system. The \$720-million assistance package for health care workers, facilities and municipal emergency services that the Premier announced last week is part of our leadership as well.

We continue to lead, but leadership is also about collaboration. Leadership is understanding the role that we can play, but also understanding the broader role that can be played by other players in the field. That is why we expect and demand leadership from our federal government. There is not only a Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care for Ontario, there is Health Canada. SARS and all of its impacts, its economic impacts, its health care impacts, is not just an impact for Toronto public health or York public health or for the government of Ontario; it impacts the citizens of Canada as well as the citizens of Ontario.

I just finished reading the latest Time magazine. Dr John Hoey, who is editor of the Canadian Medical Association Journal, says:

"It is perhaps too easy to mock politicians when they try to allay fears by eating at Chinese restaurants in Toronto or steakhouses in Alberta. But after dining, they must get on with the job of repairing public health in Canada. Already there are promises, at least in Ontario, of new money and resources for public health. They come not a moment too soon."

We are here to help, but we need leadership from the federal level of government as well. Some signs are auspicious. On May 29, Prime Minister Chrétien was quoted as saying, when referencing Premier Eves, "He knows, I've talked with him that we will do whatever is needed, but we're not in the field as such; the operation of the hospitals are under provincial authority." I think that's a positive comment. He is quoted from St Petersburg as saying, "We want to collaborate. We're aware that it is causing some burden on the Ontario government as it is causing a burden to us too." I take those as positive comments from the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister, who is wont to have said on another occasion that "the proof is the proof"—we on this side of the House take him at his word that he wants to collaborate with us, work with us and help us, but we also need the tangible evidence that will assist us in ensuring that our hospital system, our health care system, our public health system, our health workers have the ability to deal with the job.

I just came from St Michael's Hospital earlier this morning. St Michael's is the leading tertiary care centre in the new, interim four-hospital alliance. Based on suggestions of health care workers—we were listening to

them—they suggested this approach for round two of SARS, and we're doing it. St Michael's very beginnings, its very history, was about controlling infectious disease in an urban setting. They are taking on this burden again, on an interim basis of course, while we wrestle round two of SARS to the ground. They are there creating the infrastructure, doing the work.

1540

Jeff Lozon, the CEO, told me that they can calculate—this is just one hospital—that the additional cost associated with SARS in their one hospital is \$80,000 a day. We are in week 11 of SARS in our midst—\$80,000 a day. I recollect that Mount Sinai Hospital has indicated to us on previous occasions that the number of masks they have used is in the millions. Gowns—once, twice, three times a day being changed, because we have learned that a physician or a nurse cannot use a gown in one area and then walk to another area of the hospital with the same gown on. We have to change the gowns every step of the way through the hospital. Masks and gowns—millions of them have been used over the last 10 weeks alone.

Then there are the quarantine efforts, there are the infection control efforts, which we need to continue in our hospitals, under the new normal, forever. The impacts on health workers who had to stay home, the impacts on our hospital system to reschedule the other 99% of what our health care system is all about—there are costs associated with this. There are costs associated with this that will protect Ontarians and Canadians and that need to be accounted for—costs associated with the heroic efforts at Toronto public health, York public health, Simcoe public health and Parry Sound-Muskoka public health now, where there are 1,000 people under quarantine.

The bills add up. When the Prime Minister of the country asks what he can do for Toronto and Ontario, there are many things that he can do and should do, but one of them should be to be part of the fiscal, financial solution that ensures the integrity of our health care system and, even more to the point, ensures that our wonderful, heroic health workers have the degree of support and effort that will ensure that they can do their jobs. There is no greater challenge than what they do day in and day out. We know the challenges, and through the leadership of our government we have faced those challenges head-on to ensure that we are part of the solution, not part of the problem. It's a simple word and a simple deed that we expect out of our federal friends. The word is yes, and the deed is, "We, too, wish to be part of the solution, not part of the problem."

Hon David Young (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I certainly appreciate having an opportunity this afternoon to speak about this most important issue. I want to pick up where the Premier and the Minister of Health left off. I want to talk about, first and foremost, the sacrifices that have been made by so many around us, by our neighbours, by our friends, by public health officials, by doctors, by nurses.

I want to talk about the magnitude of the sacrifice that has been made by men and women across this country, individuals that, until about five or six weeks ago, we thought of as just regular hard-working professional people and who we now realize are heroes in the truest sense of the word, for they have reacted in a most heroic fashion to what is an enormous challenge, a challenge that, quite frankly, none of us completely understands, a challenge that not only threatens them but threatens their families, their friends and their neighbours.

Earlier today, I had an opportunity to speak with a number of nurses from the North York General Hospital, which is situated in my riding. I spoke to them, but perhaps more accurately, I listened to them and I heard them say in rather poignant, moving and unforgettable terms that they are committed to containing this awful and deadly disease.

They also talked, though, about the sacrifices they are making—each and every one of them. They talked about the challenges and the stress that come with the commitment they have made to the people of this province. They go home each and every day wondering whether or not they carry with them this deadly disease. They hug their children in a way that's a little different than they once did. And of course they hear from their friends and family what is a very natural question, and that is, "Why are you continuing to do this? Leave. Come home. Don't jeopardize your safety, Mom, Dad. Don't jeopardize our safety." But these men and women go back each and every day. They wake up in the morning, they get out of bed and they go, knowing that not only are they jeopardizing their own safety but they are jeopardizing potentially the safety of those around them.

I say to you that we, as a government, have done everything we can do and we commit to do everything possible in the future to support these individuals, to make sure they have the equipment, the resources, the support that is necessary.

That support comes in various forms. It comes with words—we're engaging in that to some degree today—and it comes in terms of actions. We've seen the Premier stand up for those individuals and for people across this province, make a series of announcements, attend at hospitals and show his support. It comes by understanding the magnitude and the scope of their problem. It also comes, quite frankly, by committing to be with them, not just today but tomorrow and for months and years to come as we face this very uncertain and horrifying disease.

On May 28, the Premier announced the \$720-million SARS assistance package for health care professionals, facilities and emergency services. At the same time, the Premier made very clear that we would be there to support municipalities—Toronto, the greater Toronto area and Barrie—municipalities that have incurred some very significant costs over the last little while in relation to extra services that were required to combat this deadly disease.

I think it is essential that all of us in this chamber park our partisan politics at the door. I think it is essential that every politician in this country put their partisan politics aside so that we can collectively fight this disease.

That is why I wrote to the federal Minister of National Defence, who is the individual in Ottawa designated to look after matters of this sort. He is in charge of the disaster financial assistance arrangement program that the federal government has had in place for a number of years. I wrote to Minister McCallum on April 11 last, and I indicated at that time that we in this province were incurring great challenges, including financial challenges, and I asked him to join with us to help us, help municipalities, help public health officials, help health care workers to combat this disease. I was a little disappointed that there was no immediate response—quite frankly, no response over the course of a number of weeks.

1550

I did write to him again. I corresponded with him again on May 23 last. Once again I repeated just how urgent and important this situation is. Fortunately, I have heard back from him, and I am pleased to say that we will be meeting this Friday. I'm hopeful at that time we will obtain a commitment from the federal government. Minister Clement has talked about the words that have been used by the Prime Minister and others in Ottawa, and I thank them for those words, but now is the time for action. Now is the time for something far more than words. I'm hopeful that at the meeting on Friday, the minister from the federal government will come forward with something very substantial.

Of course, there is precedent for this level of financial assistance to individuals across this country when they face great challenges like this. We've seen it on a number of occasions, and it is of the utmost importance that that be conveyed and the money come forthwith, because while the Premier has indicated that we in the provincial government will continue to stand with those officials and health care workers on the front line and we will be there to support them with or without federal financial assistance, it is clearly posing a great challenge to this province to continue to go it alone. So it is essential that we obtain that financial assistance, deeds and actions from the federal government, and it is my sincere hope that by this time next week we will have an agreement in place with our colleagues in Ottawa, an agreement that will allow us to do even more for the men and women across this country who have sacrificed so much.

Hon Brian Coburn (Minister of Tourism and Recreation): I too would like to begin by thanking Ontario's health care professionals, the doctors, nurses, technicians, researchers and all those medical service providers who once again are working extremely hard to help us contain SARS. We do owe them a tremendous debt of gratitude for their heroic efforts to contain this outbreak and to ensure that Toronto and Ontario are safe places to visit, to live and to work.

I'd also like to acknowledge certainly Premier Eves and Minister Clement, who have provided very strong leadership in this very difficult time. We've never had a health situation of this nature and scope before, and it's fortunate that we have the kind of leadership that can successfully rise to the challenge of a difficult situation.

Two months ago, on April 1, I held my first meeting with a group of tourism leaders from across the province to listen to their advice, so that we could develop a strategy on how to reactivate and attract tourists and tourism back into Toronto and Ontario, so that we could meet some of these challenges to make very decisive actions and move forward quickly.

On April 24, the Premier announced that the province would contribute \$10 million to the first phase of an aggressive marketing campaign to promote Toronto and Ontario. Then, on April 29, the Premier announced an additional \$118 million for a two-year tourism and investment recovery plan, with the aim of rebuilding global confidence in Toronto and Ontario as world-class travel destinations. The first phase of this campaign was rolled out some three weeks ago, with an intense marketing campaign to ensure Ontario residents and visitors that Toronto and Ontario are safe, exciting and vibrant destinations.

Our next step is a Toronto event to showcase this city and our province. We have an aggressive recovery campaign underway. Last week I announced the Concert for Toronto, a six-hour concert featuring a roster of Canada's internationally famous musicians. Tickets to this music event of a lifetime were purchased by music fans from the Yukon to Florida, from British Columbia to Newfoundland. For six hours on June 21, Toronto's SkyDome and Air Canada Centre will indeed rock'n'roll.

Interjection: A little poppin'.

Hon Mr Coburn: And a little poppin' too.

We are moving fast on a recovery campaign designed to rebuild Toronto's tourism industry and Ontario's image as a primary destination for visitors from around the world, as a choice destination for events, conventions and leisure travel. We are working to lure tourists back by targeting Ontario residents, Canadians residents, the US border states and the overseas market. We have television and newspaper ads ready to run in the border states, in the international market, once this latest outbreak of SARS is contained.

Our government has provided funding to high-value entertainment packages at never-before-seen prices, such as "It's time for a little T.O.," which was a package put together by Mirvish Productions, hotels, restaurants and the Blue Jays, and the other package, "It's time for a little more T.O.," from Second City Productions. Both of these packages, combining deep-discount shows, dinners, hotel stays and ballgames, sold like hotcakes.

There are many tourism associations that should be recognized for their efforts. In addition to many others, Tourism Toronto and the Ontario Restaurant, Hotel and Motel Association have played key roles. More partnerships to rebuild tourism in Toronto and Ontario are

appearing on a daily basis. The Toronto Tourism Industry Community Coalition, for instance, has brought government, labour and business together to effectively address Toronto's tourism crisis. We are working aggressively to get our residents in the hospitality and tourism-related sector back to full employment.

In addition, we are supporting festivals and celebrations that are recognized around the world as value attractions to bring tourists and visitors here to Toronto and Ontario, events such as Caribana and the Molson Indy: week-long celebrations that have worldwide recognition.

Over the next few weeks, we will be announcing the specifics of some of the other initiatives under our tourism recovery plan. These are the event marketing and development fund, destination marketing partnership fund, and arts and cultural packaging program. These are some of the programs in which we will work aggressively with our partners to stimulate tourism and attract tourists back to Toronto and Ontario.

For the past few months, my parliamentary assistant, Wayne Wettlaufer, Deputy Minister Bill Allen and myself have been criss-crossing the province to meet with industry leaders, stakeholders, and provincial and federal counterparts. We have convened tourism advisory group meetings in Toronto, and stakeholder roundtables in locations from Kingston to Thunder Bay. I'd also like to thank my colleague the Honourable Jim Flaherty, who has joined me and my parliamentary assistant in several meetings here in Toronto. My deputy minister was recently in Japan to meet with industry representative to encourage travel to Ontario. We've met with federal, provincial and territorial tourism partners as well, and are heartened by the understanding of other provinces about the situation in Ontario and their support for our tourism recovery plans.

You know, there's one missing link in all of this. We have solid support from all the players except one: the federal government. Certainly, Toronto is the destination of choice for visitors to Canada and this province. This city accounts for about one sixth of the total visitors to Ontario. Canada and Ontario need the city back in full operation. We need it hitting on all cylinders. It is this country's gateway and one of its important cultural and visitor destinations for visitors from around the world. As the Toronto advertising slogan goes, it is time for a little T.O.

Ontarians are pulling together. They're pulling together to meet this challenge. We've seen this on the public health front; we're seeing it on the tourism front with individuals, associations, businesses, and governments working together to meet our challenges. It is now time for the federal government, with the bit in their teeth, to pick up the slack and help us meet this challenge in a positive way so that we can revitalize the hospitality industry and get our residents back to work in hospitality and tourism.

1600

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): I'm honoured on behalf of my party to join this debate.

I'll be sharing my time with the members for St Catharines, Prince Edward-Hastings, Hamilton East, Parkdale-High Park, York West and Windsor West.

I want to say first off that I offer these words in the name of those who have been impacted by SARS—those who have become ill, those who have died, those who have courageously served us, those who have experienced economic hardship—and to my city, which has experienced a perceptible decline in economic activity, in our international reputation and in our confidence. Against such a test, the public will judge us, and they will judge our collective capacity to respond.

I say today that I will not be supporting this resolution because it fails that test miserably, because, as is too often the case, they—this government—have chosen the path that puts them in conflict with the federal government. In their 40 minutes of conversation today to this resolution, they have rebuked others for exactly the same set of circumstances that they themselves had contributed to.

Earlier in his remarks, the Premier of Ontario announced that the city of Toronto will be receiving a cheque in the amount of \$2 million to deal with their additional costs. I make two points about this. Firstly, the city's costs are estimated at \$10.5 million. Already, services have been redeployed from the fight against AIDS and tuberculosis to other issues. That fact is, the Minister of Health has said, 11 weeks into this, the province of Ontario, for all of their press releases, has not yet sent cheques to hospitals and the city of Toronto, which are dealing with the considerably added costs. I think that makes this point rather well, that months after SARS has become scorched into our minds and the press releases have gone out, the province's cheques are not yet in the mail, but our Premier has the gumption to author this kind of resolution and lay an attack at the feet of the federal government.

It was only a few days ago that our Premier himself announced his expanded package. His first instinct, as it always seems to be, is to seek political comfort by using his majority to pass a resolution that attempts to shame the federal government.

I think Ontarians were comforted some time back with the words that all three levels of government would be contributing, to work together, that they were making a pledge to do so. What, then, does it say about our Premier and about his instinct and about his style of leadership that he'd rather send a letter and lay a resolution like this before the floor of the Ontario Legislature than to pick up the phone and establish a viable, effective working relationship with the Prime Minister of this country?

It's with a great deal of disappointment that I stand and speak to this resolution. I want to improve this resolution, to make it a resolution that better reflects the circumstances. I'd like to move the following resolution.

I move that the resolution be amended by striking out the last sentence and replacing it with the following words:

"Call on all levels of government to live up to their responsibilities by doing more than just announcing funding, but actually sending the financial assistance promised, without delay, to those so keenly affected by SARS in Ontario."

The Acting Speaker: Mr Smitherman has moved that the resolution be amended by striking out the last sentence and replacing it with:

"Call on all levels of government to live up to their responsibilities by doing more than just announcing funding, but actually sending the financial assistance promised, without delay, to those so keenly affected by SARS in Ontario."

Mr Smitherman: Earlier today in the gallery we had nurses from North York General Hospital. The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and I believe an MPP in the area, spoke during his remarks about those nurses. He indicated they'd made many points to him. But they were here today to make a rather emphatic point which that minister didn't deal with in his comments, and the emphatic point that those nurses, the front-line workers, the very people who have become heroes, whose courage has been lauded by all, including in this resolution—those very same nurses came to the Ontario Legislature today to make one very important point: that they believe that this issue requires a full airing and that they require the kind of whistle-blower protection that one finds in the Public Inquiries Act.

But it was interesting, wasn't it, that the Minister of Municipal Affairs, in relating his conversation with those nurses, where he said he listened to them, didn't choose to highlight the same very issue that brought them to this Legislature today. I found that representation to be very disrespectful to those nurses. They have my confidence.

Earlier today I was at my community office at 410 Sherbourne to visit my doctor, who has an office upstairs. For the first time in my life I conducted an exchange with my doctor while we were both wearing masks. For so many people in our society and so many people in Toronto, this has become a normal way of life. These very same front-line workers who have experienced so much hardship and so much challenge and so much risk and so much fear and so much fright are not being given the opportunity they have earned, with their front-line courage, to tell their stories in the first person and with the full protection of the law.

To suggest that a public inquiry is nothing more than an excuse for finger pointing, which is the language the Minister of Health chooses to use, is disrespectful to those very people he calls heroes in this resolution, and I think disrespectful to the intention of public inquiries and certainly disrespectful to the quality of the people in our province whom we've been able to summon to positions of leadership to head those inquiries. There is no good excuse to reject the idea of a public inquiry.

We want to talk about the extent to which we can make improvements. We have a plan to put 8,000 more nurses into Ontario's hospitals to provide those front-line services that we know are essential to restore confidence

in our system of public health care. We know that the surge capacity of the system has been so severely reduced that as the SARS situation struck us in Toronto our capacity to respond was stretched dangerously thin. Everybody knows that now, but we do not know the extent to which we have to act to respond to that and make sure it does not occur again.

As I come to a close, I say that I will not support this resolution, because this resolution does not meet the important public test that my constituents are asking me to live up to, which is that I work with all levels of government and bring the best of all levels of government to bear. This resolution, unfortunately, seeks to point fingers at the very time when the public expects all levels of government to work together and tackle this and ensure it does not ever happen again.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): To begin, I think all of us, no matter where we sit in this House, are here to offer congratulations to those who have worked so hard and so assiduously in dealing with the problem of SARS. This is particularly true of the front-line workers in the medical field who have had to deal on a daily basis, often very long days, with situations confronting hospitals and other health care institutions and have found it very difficult and very stressful to do so in an adequate fashion. They've worked extremely hard, and I think each one of us in all our communities, particularly those communities directly affected, are congratulating those individuals and are thankful that we have them in our society.

One of the problems we see in the background with this particular resolution—you always say, "Where is the hostage in it?" because the government always brings forward something with a hostage. I'm looking at the resolution and thinking, "That looks pretty supportable." Then you get to the middle of it, and it's like the government advertising. There's a big pat on the back for the government. Once again it's self-congratulatory. Without that, I think most people in this Legislature, regardless of their political affiliation, would find it a compelling resolution to support. But instead, we engage in finger pointing.

Those of us in the opposition could say, "Well, the Premier was in Arizona at the most difficult time in the middle of Easter weekend." That's behind us. I'm not going to get into that kind of finger pointing, because I don't think that's helpful at this point in time. I do think it's important that all levels of government work together on this. I think there is a case to be made for the federal government to provide funding—and significant funding.

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Minister of Public Safety and Security): They've got a billion dollars for Russia.

1610

Mr Bradley: I say to my good friend Mr Runciman that the problem is that when the federal government has transferred funds before, those funds ended up in tax cuts. If the government were really serious, if the government really wanted to find the money to carry out

its programs to combat SARS, then of course they would say, "Look, we're going to postpone our tax cuts. We've reached a new situation, a difficult situation. We're going to postpone those tax cuts." What you really want the federal money for is so you can deal with the SARS crisis and give tax cuts. It's really there to fund tax cuts. If you had said, "We're going to forgo those tax cuts," I would understand that.

I would say to my friend Bob Runciman that if you said that, I would be the first person to get up and lead the applause for you and others on the government benches. But you don't want to do that. It's why you always want federal money. You want to pay for your tax cuts because you know, in good conscience, that you cannot give out corporate tax cuts, more gifts to the corporations, and still be able to fund public health in this province.

Indeed, under the Harris-Eves government you cut funding for public health in recent years. According to your own public accounts and estimates, funding for public health units has dropped about 25% in the last four years. Of course we all remember that in 1998 you completely downloaded responsibility for public health to municipalities and then, when the municipalities kicked up a fuss, you decided you were going to pay 50% of it.

No one could see SARS coming—I don't want to pretend you could see SARS coming—but you know that something like SARS can happen. We know that in the world in which we live today we can be confronted with any particular disease, some of which we haven't heard of before, and we have to be ready for what we call the "surge factor." People in public institutions have said, "Look, we don't have that capacity built into our hospitals. We don't have the capacity built into our health care system to deal with what we call the surge problem, an unexpected problem."

There's another problem out there, and that is that people feel intimidated about speaking out on serious issues related to SARS and other diseases. I well remember when the medical officer of health in Peel or one of the medical officers of health in that office in Peel spoke out about West Nile virus. He was shunted to the sidelines and not allowed to speak at a public meeting—a press conference—because he had said the government didn't want to talk about West Nile virus because perhaps they had not put forward last year the effort they should.

Let's look at another aspect of this. You've heard me talk about government advertising. The government is first in line to accept the credit, last in line to accept the responsibility. I thought the early ads I saw on SARS were quite informative and quite good, because they contained no government propaganda. Now when you turn on the radio or open the newspaper, the first thing in the SARS ads is, "Here's what your government is doing," not what the public should do, not what precautions should be taken—quite frankly, that would be quite legitimate, just as it would be for West Nile. But you people use every opportunity to pat yourselves on the back, to congratulate yourselves. Even when you have a

legitimate reason to advertise or provide information to the public, you have an inability to do it without congratulating yourselves, without using partisan, self-congratulatory advertising, and that's most unfortunate.

I want to say to my friend Bob Runciman that I thought the first ads I saw were excellent and very supportable; I would never be critical of them. But somebody in the Premier's office said, "You know, we can use this situation to pat ourselves on the back, to say we're doing a good job and we're going to do a good job with West Nile." To me, that is a misuse of public funding. If you took the money you're using on self-congratulatory, partisan advertising, if you took the money you were going to give to the corporations in yet another tax holiday, another tax break, if you took those kinds of funds and put them into the health care system to build in that surge capacity, then I think we would be in a much better situation.

Thank goodness we've had on the front lines of our health care system dedicated individuals who put their own health and perhaps their own lives on the line to support others in our society and deal with SARS. I congratulate them. I'm just sorry this government has decided to bring forward a resolution this afternoon that points fingers in one direction and pats backs in another.

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): One thing I've developed a strong sense of over the years is that politics doesn't mix very well with anything else. Politics is a fine craft on its own, but I have seen examples of where politics attempts to micromanage or to get involved and make the decisions.

When I first graduated from university and took a job with the wonderful old Department of Highways, one of my first duties was to go and see the local member of provincial Parliament and get a list of people I was to hire my staff from for the particular project. I watched over the years as politicians would help me design a bridge or a road, and it was my conviction that it wasn't always to the betterment of the highway or the road.

I've watched with dismay over the last eight years as politicians decided they knew everything about schools and were going to make political changes to schools rather than allowing professionals and listening to educators make their decisions.

I'm more impressed every day that not all of the knowledge in the world rests within this chamber. In fact, we probably need more questions than we ask in this House.

I know as an engineer that when we design a bridge or a building, we incorporate what's called a factor of safety, so if there are more cars or heavier trucks on the bridge than we had intended there to be, it's not going to fall down. There is some margin of error. Well, within the last eight years in health care, I have seen that margin of error disappear. We have seen that from 1995 on, in spite of their election promises, they made deep cuts in health care in their first years in office. Between 1996-97 and 1997-98, they cut \$700 million from hospital operating budgets. I believe all but two hospitals in

Ontario are presently operating in deficit. I believe in 1995, two hospitals were operating in deficit; the rest were in surplus. There is no margin of error within the hospitals to accommodate a major accident, let alone something as serious as the SARS issue. We have seen 5,700 acute care beds cut from hospitals—8,000 beds in total when you consider chronic care and rehab. So the hospitals don't have much margin of error.

There's a wonderful old expression that says, "If you want to truly understand something, try to change it." This government has done the changes and, in doing so, I think is learning what's happening. It has politicized the health care process. This very resolution we're debating this afternoon is a political statement. It's not something intended to deal with the SARS crisis. The Premier could have picked up the phone and called the Prime Minister. I know the call would have been returned. We have seen letters going from minister to minister when phone calls would have sufficed.

This is an issue for the health care professionals. The first words we heard out of the politicians, and I'm not—no, I won't say that, but the first attack or approach out of the politicians was, "We've got to get business back on a normal footing." So the initial initiatives went to telling everybody, "We're open for business. Everything's fine. SARS will be gone tomorrow. SARS will be gone in a day or two," when the initiative should have been to the health care professionals, to say, "What do you need? What can we do to help you? We will stay out of your way, but tell us what you need." Very clearly, the pressure should not have been, "Let's get business back open," but, "Let's get SARS beaten, and if SARS is beaten, then business will follow."

There's no question that it has hurt business. I don't recall anything in history, certainly in my lifetime, that was of this magnitude. Once we have dealt with it, will there ever be something similar that comes along? I hope not, but I'm suspicious and would caution that we at least need to be prepared.

We need to keep business healthy. I represent a rural riding that's two hours from here, but I know that if Toronto is not doing well, the rest of Ontario is not doing well. It truly is an economic engine for this province and this country. But the challenge was to solve the SARS crisis, and the rest would follow.

1620

There has been an awful price paid for this approach that we've taken. Thirty individuals have died; others are infected. I am trying to think of the people who go to work every day in a hospital that has had SARS present in it. Certainly we can't say enough good about doctors, registered nurses, registered professional nurses, but we need to acknowledge people like technicians, maintenance people, kitchen staff, security, orderlies—everyone that, day after day, went into the hospital knowing the risk that was involved in their jobs. There are literally thousands of unsung heroes that need recognition and support. They really don't need a photo op in many ways;

they need a cheque. That has not flowed from this province yet.

But certainly it has highlighted things that have given us an opportunity to learn something from it. We've learned—or maybe some of us already knew, but we got better publicity over the fact—that our health care professionals are terribly overworked. Our doctors, our nurses are terribly overworked—long shifts, working overtime. We've learned that many of them are part-time, working irregular hours with no benefits and yet doing a hero's job in the hospitals. We've learned that, for many of them, a job really consists of three or four part-time jobs and being forced to travel from one hospital to another. We've learned that already, and we learned it very quickly.

If we learned that, what else can we learn about our health care system? What's the best way to learn about it? I believe fervently that the best way to learn about it is a full public inquiry. Walkerton was catastrophic. It merited—although the government didn't agree to it initially; in fact, I believe the government opposed the concept of a full public inquiry. But out of that public inquiry came information and recommendations that will be helpful for every water system and every resident of Ontario.

At this stage, SARS is present in the Toronto area. Hospitals all over the province are taking precautions. Will it ever get to Belleville or Brockville or Thunder Bay or wherever? We want to make sure that doesn't happen. We will make the best assurance that it doesn't happen by knowing what is going on with SARS.

This government should have nothing to lose by calling a full public inquiry. There has to be a wonderful opportunity to get good answers out of it. Why possibly not hold a full public inquiry? It can't be cost. The material that has gone into the ads in the media to pat themselves on the back—that money would have gone a long way to fund a public inquiry—\$400 million into partisan ads. Surely some of it could be directed to something that is having such a crippling effect on our health care system, on our businesses and on individuals.

I know in my community and in other parts of Ontario there are individuals who have passed away by themselves—no access to family or visitors for weeks at a time prior to their death—because of the need for the hospital to take precautions. Why is the hospital doing such severe restrictions? Because we don't know enough about SARS yet. They're erring on the side of caution. They have no choice. I compliment them on that. They're erring on the side of caution. But we need to know what is going on.

If nothing else comes out of today, the government has an opportunity to stand up and say, "We're going to hold an inquiry." I have no choice to vote against this resolution, but I call upon the government: call a full public inquiry.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): I'm pleased to join my colleagues in this debate today. I want to start, as other members have, by praising the real heroes in this

battle, the real heroes in this tragedy: the front-line health care workers across Ontario. These are women and men who, every day, go into the workplace at tremendous risk to themselves and do their jobs professionally, do their jobs with dedication, carry out their duties with the greatest commitment to their patients, but also live in constant fear of going home at the end of that day and hugging their kids, because they're just not sure; going home and having dinner with their family, because they're just not sure; going out to the malls with their kids, because they're just not sure. Despite all the precautions they're taking, these individuals put a great deal on the line every day in their workplace, and they truly should be honoured by us. The work that they have done should certainly be acknowledged. I compare their work today very much to the type of risks and the work that police officers and firefighters take every day when they go to work in this province. Again, these health care workers have certainly come through, have shone and have been the stars and the heroes of what has been a tragedy for this province and for the city.

I am saddened by the tone of this resolution. Up until now, I think the opposition has taken a positive tone in dealing with this issue. I think the opposition has tried very hard not to point fingers. We have asked some tough questions and asked for some answers. But certainly this resolution is all about pointing fingers and blame rather than pointing the direction. It is disappointing. We should be used to that in this Legislature because the favourite hobby-horse of this government is to attack the federal government. This is not a time to attack another level of government; this is a time to work co-operatively with other levels of government.

We have asked, on this side of the House, for some very constructive solutions to deal with this problem. Nurses have told us and health care workers have come forward and told us some of the concerns that they've had, some of the problems that may have occurred in the system between the first and second outbreak. Some of them have told us that they expressed some concern to their supervisors, to the management, about some of those issues.

We have asked for a public inquiry on this side of the House. Again, Walkerton is the greatest example of how a public inquiry worked in a very positive, beneficial way to put in place the type of recommendations that will ensure another Walkerton tragedy does not occur. We have over 30 deaths in this province as a result of SARS. We believe it's appropriate for this government to call a public inquiry—not to call a public inquiry to see who is to blame, but to see what mistakes have been made, to see what gaps in the system have occurred and, most importantly, to ensure that we come forward with the type of recommendations that will ensure that hopefully we can prevent this type of situation again.

There is no guarantee it will never happen again. There is no guarantee we won't have another outbreak. But to the degree that we have control in the health care system, as government, as politicians, I think we have a

serious responsibility here to ensure that steps are taken through a public inquiry to look at what may have gone wrong and how do we fix that to make sure it doesn't happen again.

I am disappointed with the fact that this government has said no to a public inquiry; they are going to carry out some internal review. That is not good enough. They were dragged kicking and screaming into a Walkerton inquiry. I believe they will be dragged kicking and screaming into an inquiry into this. It took three weeks at that time, I think, for the opposition to convince the government that it was the right thing to do. I don't understand why they would just not agree to a public inquiry. What are they afraid of? What damage can that do to the health care system in Ontario? Absolutely none. It could only help the health care system in Ontario if we had a public inquiry into SARS, the second outbreak particularly, and what could have been done to prevent the second outbreak.

Toronto obviously is by far the most affected and most devastated community, both in where the cases were, the impact on the hospitals, the community, the businesses, hotels, tourism, and the morale of the city. Clearly, no one will doubt that Toronto has been by far the most affected and devastated community.

1630

But as we discuss this as well, let us not forget that the provincial government has announced funding for hospitals and relief for affected people and people who lost wages. I understand that there are also communities outside of Toronto that helped out in this. They did the right thing. There was no question they had to do that; they wanted to do it. And that has to be acknowledged as well. The general hospital in Hamilton, for a period of time, became the trauma centre when Sunnybrook had to be shut down. They picked up the slack and did a great job and did it willingly. Precautions were taken in all Hamilton hospitals. Many of the precautions that were here in Toronto were extended to hospitals beyond the GTA, and rightly so. It was the right thing to do.

I guess what I'm asking today is, when you look at the compensation that is there by the government of Ontario, could that compensation also be extended to communities outside of Toronto where the health care system has picked up extra costs as a result? In my own community of Hamilton, the estimate is about \$6.5 million in additional costs that the health care system has had to pick up. There's only two ways it's going to happen. Either this government is going to have to come up with that money, or they're going to have to cut services, run deficits or cut front-line patient services. That would be unfortunate and disastrous to many of these hospitals in these communities.

I cannot support this resolution. I wish the government had brought something forward that was positive and encouraged people to work together, encouraged governments to work together and encouraged communities to work together. Instead, they brought a resolution forward saying, "We have done a wonderful job. We're great.

Look at us. The bad federal government hasn't done their part, blah, blah, blah." The usual spin comes out of the Premier's office in attacking another level of government. This is not the time or place for politics; this is not the time or place to attack another level of government; this is the time and place to work together at all levels. It's unfortunate that this government doesn't get it.

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): I'm pleased to have a few minutes to join the members in the House on the debate following the introduction of the motion by the Premier on one very important issue, and that is SARS, which is costing all of us, members in the House and every member in our communities, all of us.

Just by reading a couple of lines in the Premier's motion today, I can see that he has a couple of good points, and I'm fine to say that yes, we all recognize the importance to deal with the issue in a very professional manner—the staff outside, those caring for the people out there, and ourselves in here as well. I think the Premier is attaching a lot of emphasis on the economic side, the economic effects subsequent to the SARS outbreak. And who can fault the Premier for saying that indeed the consequences have had a very severe and tremendously negative impact on our economic situation here?

I think we have to take into consideration the existing situation and let alone the past, because the past is past, and from the past the only thing we hope for is to learn from what we have had in the past. We have to deal with the present situation, which is the human factor, the human situation, for those who are affected by SARS, their families and for the people as mentioned in the motion here by the Premier, those who, day in and day out, every hour of the day, have to fight the consequences of SARS. Those are the health care workers, the technicians, the scientists, the public health officials, the paramedics and the nurses—everyone included.

We are forgetting one very important thing here: that all of these people have families as well. Perhaps they feel the pressure of their jobs and families more than anybody else. We forget that they also have lives to live, and they're living in very difficult times and circumstances. They are looking to us to perhaps alleviate the situation they are facing, and we are not going to improve the situation or extend a helping hand to all those workers out there by being inflammatory. If we really want to do our job here—and I'm calling on the Premier and the government members—it is not to point fingers to the city or the federal government, time after time calling on the federal government to provide immediate financial assistance to cover exceptional health costs etc, and to commit immediately.

You're going to have someone who's going to say, "What are you doing, Mr Premier, to alleviate the existing situation? Call again for the federal government to live up to its responsibilities like the government of Ontario has." With all due respect, this is an issue for which we have to put politics on the back burner. We have to look this issue straight in the eyes and say, "Look, this is not a political issue. This is not pointing a

finger at the federal government or otherwise. It is an issue that is affecting everyone, especially our own economic situation." If you were looking for help from the federal government, would you really go out and attack them and say, "Do your part and take your responsibility"? I think there are other ways of approaching a particular situation. I think it was my colleague from Hamilton who said "Get on the phone. If you have to go to Ottawa, well, go to Ottawa. If you have to meet with the mayor of Toronto, sit down with the mayor of Toronto."

So go to Ottawa, speak to our Prime Minister—I don't think he would say no; I don't think he would refuse—and say we have a national situation here. Let's not concentrate it strictly in Alberta or Ontario. This is everybody's issue here, so I think it's important for the Premier to say it's not an issue to point fingers or to score points—"We may have an election coming in the foreseeable future, so I want to look nice." This is not the time. If we're in this particular situation, it's not of their doing. It's the government's doing as well. They did not import SARS, of course. But let me say that we could have done a heck of a better job if we had another 8,000 to 10,000 professional registered nurses assisting those who are stressed to the point—if we had more doctors, for example, it would address the same situation.

As I said, they are humans and they are stressed. I told the Premier what we would have done, what we would do, and what we will do. We have already committed ourselves to immediately hire 8,000 professional registered nurses, because they fired some 10,000. Since 1999, they've said they were going to hire another 10,000. Well, they didn't. As well, we have said that we would not only hire 8,000 new nurses, but we would bring them up to par with the national average, because we are the lowest per capita behind British Columbia. I think if we had the necessary professional help, perhaps some of these cases would not have escaped. I'm not saying that this was done on purpose. It's not an issue where you can say, "Let's blame this hospital. Let's blame this particular department." It happened, and we should be taking care if it; it's going to happen again, and we should be ready. That is why Mr McGuinty said we are going to have 500 new nursing spots, because they are needed, on top of the 8,000 registered nurses.

1640

They call for a public hearing to see if we have gone wrong somewhere, without pointing fingers at doctors, nurses and hospital departments. Let's have a public hearing. I think the Premier should be the one to say, "Let's not fool around with this issue. It's too important to put on the back burner." He should have been the first one to say, "I'd like to know. I think all of us would like to know. I think the public would like to know. Let's have a public hearing and find out how we can improve on some of our mistakes."

Don't forget that the distress and human cost are severe. Almost 50% of our nurses have to hold two and three jobs to make their weekly pay, which means they

are part-time. I don't think it's right, I don't think it's fair and I don't think it helps our present situation and our future situation as well.

It must affect them mentally as well, when they know that a number of our nurses have left the professional field they love and gone to private agencies and are making two and three times the money, and even more, than they were getting paid by the provincial government. Our own St Michael's is having staff from agencies who make between \$70 and \$100 an hour. That has to have an effect on our nurses as well.

We have an amendment to the main motion that we get all three levels of government and all agencies to work together and face the SARS issue. It is an important issue. It is not an issue to play politics with, and I hope the government and the Premier understand that.

Mr Joseph Cordiano (York South-Weston): Of course we won't be supporting this resolution, because it seriously lacks any kind of real integrity with respect to what's required in Ontario at the present time with the crisis we're facing yet again—the SARS crisis, the recent outbreak.

Is it not incumbent upon the government, and was there ever a more important time, to have a commission of public inquiry? This resolution should call for that commission of public inquiry. It should also call for all three levels of government to work together. Failing that, this resolution is simply a political message, and I think people have grown tired of the kind of partisanship we are seeing with this resolution. They are tired of it.

We put forward an opposition day motion back on May 6. We had this debate. At that time I said we needed a commission of inquiry. Why? Because there were many unanswered questions. I said the province was lacking in first-response capability, that because the government had rid itself of all the lab scientists who used to be in its employ, we had virtually no capability to screen for any agents, any kinds of viruses such as SARS, that might enter our jurisdiction. That, I say to the government, has left us vulnerable. It is their responsibility to protect all citizens, and we should have those provincial labs up and running. What did this government do in the past? It cut those labs, seriously cutting back our capability of first response.

I also say to the government that we lack any kind of surge capability in our health care system. A crisis like SARS hits and virtually shuts down the health care system, so that patients are left with nowhere to go. Cancer patients, ongoing treatments in our health care facilities—there's nowhere for these people to turn when we have to shut down acute-care services at various hospitals that are affected by this.

I say to the government that we should have a commission of public inquiry to determine where the weakest link is in the system. It's not a finger pointing exercise. That's not what this is about. It should be an airing of all possible avenues from which to determine where we have faults in the system, where we need to make certain we have additional resources to make the system function

properly. This is, after all, a crisis we've never faced before. It is an extraordinary circumstance that calls for extraordinary measures above and beyond just responding. I say to the government that we have no choice but to respond.

It is front-line workers taking on additional responsibilities who have held up the health care system, working double and triple overtime, working on a constant, round-the-clock basis. We cannot continue in this fashion. Our system is lacking in terms of resources and its ability to cope with the additional surge that has met the health care system in responding to this crisis. So we need the inquiry for that reason.

The focus should be on the health care system and what resources are lacking from the provincial government. I say to you that it's less than becoming of the government to continue to point in other directions. When it comes to health care, you like to point the finger at Ottawa, you like to point the finger somewhere else. Frankly, the time for that is over. It is time for you to roll up your sleeves, to work even with the opposition members of this House, to work with municipal officials, to work with the federal government, to work with other provinces in unison to deal with this problem. It is a problem that encompasses the entire world. It is a problem where we can share experiences and practices. I know the government wants to do that, but we have to go beyond even that.

With this latest outbreak, I don't think we have all the answers we need to deal with this in a satisfactory fashion. We should be dealing with this in an open enough way to allow for constructive criticism to prevail. Front-line workers—nurses, other health care providers—all need to be reassured that if they are going to come forward, they can do so knowing there won't be any kind of retribution directed their way. I think that's very important in order to get at where in the system we have a need for additional resources and to shore up any weaknesses we have in the system. We know they are there. We know there have been gaps in infection control procedures. This is fairly obvious with the latest outbreak. We know we need to reinforce that.

I say to the government, be straightforward and come clean with respect to why we're not having this inquiry, put the partisanship aside. It is time to move on in a unified fashion to get to the bottom of this. I say to the government once again, it is time to call a commission of public inquiry that is beyond reproach and that is beyond question. That should be the first resolution this government puts forward, not this partisan resolution they have on the table today. I will not be supporting it.

1650

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): It is with mixed feelings that I rise in the House today to speak to the government's motion, because it is a dissonant motion. It doesn't fit with the subject matter. It, quite frankly, is not a motion that is credible for this particular Legislature.

When the government is fighting any crisis—infectious disease, any kind of problem that promises to harm people in society—we support the government. We support any government that is fulfilling its duties as the elected people in charge. This particular resolution, however, discredits that authority. It discredits a government who would like it to be assumed that they are capable of rising to that particular challenge.

It becomes very clear in the contrast between two documents, the resolution we have in front of us today and a letter that was written six weeks ago by Dalton McGuinty, the leader of the official opposition. In that letter, Mr McGuinty writes in a timely fashion, very firmly, very directly to the federal government. He says, at this time, six weeks ago, that help is needed, that there needs to be relief from the federal government directed and made available. That's the kind of leadership that is a good reflection on an issue like a brand new disease causing both real harm and fear in our community.

To have this dilatory motion here today doesn't make the same kind of sense, doesn't have any of that dignity. In fact, what we have here instead is a political pacaen from the Premier. Sadly, it is not the first such message from the Premier. I would say to you, Mr Speaker, and to the rest of the House that it is beneath the dignity of the Premier to put forward a motion that becomes transparent as not being in favour of the people who deserve our attention.

Yes, there is one line in this that talks about the front-line health care workers. But very tellingly, there is no reference here to the people and the families who suffered from SARS. I'm not saying those people are not in the intentions of the health minister, who has acquitted himself reasonably well on a number of occasions, but it is missing from the spirit of this motion in a very sad way. You would think all of us, out of just fundamental respect for the people who have suffered as a direct consequence of this disease, wouldn't play these kinds of games being foisted on the House today. You would think that out of recognition of, as I understand, 32, potentially 36, deaths, this would make the subject of SARS immune itself to these kind of games, particularly on the part of the highest office-holder in the province of Ontario, save the Lieutenant Governor. But that's not what we find today.

I think we had the right opportunity six weeks ago to engage the federal government, which Mr McGuinty did in a very direct fashion. I will remind you, on April 17, when Mr McGuinty wrote to the federal government to engage them in this particular issue, in that timely fashion, this House wasn't even sitting. SARS was not considered to be sufficiently important to have the resources of the elected officials of this province at the disposal of the health officials and the other people dealing with this.

I think the contrast in approaches is very, very telling of the character of this government, something that I think is fairly elusive when it comes to this government being straightforward. Where do they really stand when it

comes to issues of public purpose? Where is the diplomacy in this statement that we might expect from someone exercising a leadership position on something as vital, as important and as deadly as our handling of SARS? It's absent.

Sadly, it doesn't just present itself today as a weak motion, as a motion lacking in the characteristics of the leadership this province, the victims and the families have a right to expect; it has other characteristics. It would pass blame. It would put the business of this House to no greater purpose than to shame and blame some other level of government on this particular issue. I say, shame to the members of the government opposite. How dare you? This isn't your issue. This issue belongs to none of us. The members opposite have risen in full support of this abuse of the privileges of this House.

When we talk in this province about health care, we talk from the singular perspective of the people who run health care. There is only one level of government that actually manages, coordinates, funds directly, sets standards, and—frankly, as we see, totally absent from this bill—takes responsibility for how well health care works. There's only one level of government that is directly responsible for the clinics, the hospitals, the doctors' offices and the various services, public health and so forth, that have had to be directed at this particular menace, and that's the provincial government.

But that is not the resolution here today. This is not about improving our capacity as a province or even the governing party's capacity to respond to this bill; it isn't. Instead, this has really the sad notoriety of being nothing less than a distress call that the government is sending out, not for and on behalf of the victims of SARS, but for itself. It's a distress call for its financial mismanagement. It's very clear here that the government, even though it is supposed to be the level running health care, shouldering the responsibility for SARS, not letting that go—there have been questions, and I think very credible questions, raised at varying times in the SARS outbreak of who is in charge. Who is doing the interpretation?

In this community of Toronto, for a short time, fear almost got away on itself and caused an overreaction on many people's parts outside of our hospitals, where they're working so hard to deal with the disease. People here and elsewhere got to believe that this had a wider consequence than it did. That was the result of somebody not taking charge and not putting it in perspective.

Again, we may understand that there's a pattern at work here. This government isn't prepared to be seen as the responsible party; it isn't prepared to put itself forward and say, "When it comes to SARS, the buck stops with Ernie Eves." That's not what this resolution says. This is not the Premier or his health minister saying, "We are going to work and make sure that this thing happens regardless of conditions elsewhere." Instead, they seem to be sending out this distress signal about their finances. When the government of Canada offered the government of Ontario \$1 billion for the last fiscal

year, we know where that went. It went to balance the budget. It didn't get spent on new health expenditures; it went to balance the budget because there was no other way that this particular group of poor managers could find a way to deliver a balanced budget at the end of last year.

We know they're capable of redirecting those dollars. But more specific and more important to this particular topic, to what purports to be a resolution about SARS, this government needs to take responsibility for the weakened condition our health care finds itself in. Public health—and other speakers have already mentioned—has been downloaded, then partly uploaded again by the province. Every single signal sent by this government has said that public health, the prevention of disease, the dealing with infectious disease, the control of it, the coordination of it, is a low priority in this province. You can see that when you look at the estimates and see the amount of money that has been cut away from that important service.

Even today, we hear the chief medical officer of health in Toronto saying that she doesn't have the resources. That's a legitimate question, and there may be a very good answer from the other side as to how soon or how quickly we may find those resources so that we don't help people deal with SARS at the expense of the West Nile virus or contagious diseases or sexually transmitted diseases or public health conditions in restaurants or the other important work that they have to do.

What we don't expect is to see this government pass the buck, hand this off, give that responsibility away. I would say that I stand in this House with no particular sanctity around this particular issue. I think that this House demands of us to offer a quiet, respectful support to any useful measures that would help alleviate the problems for victims and to the secondary victims, being the health care workers that find themselves under such stress. The stress is increased by resolutions like this that don't speak to the reality and that don't make sense. I can tell you that it doesn't make sense to Patricia Martin, a person in my riding whose husband died in hospital and she wasn't allowed to visit. He died with a telephone in his hand. We all should be sobered by thoughts like that because they're the ones that we should be directing our time and attention to, not the political fortunes of this government.

1700

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): As I begin my remarks today, I think I want to focus on the very last line of the resolution that has been put forward by the government, which says, "Calls on the federal government to live up to its responsibilities, like the Ontario government has and provide, without delay, financial assistance to those so keenly affected by SARS in Ontario."

Well, if the provincial government had lived up to its responsibility, then the provincial government would have, by now, announced what kind of package it was going to put in place in this province for those hotel and restaurant workers who have been severely impacted be-

cause people aren't coming to this city any more because of SARS.

On May 27, my colleague Marilyn Churley, the member from Toronto-Danforth, had a question for Minister Flaherty. It involved the 4,000 hotel workers and the 12,000 restaurant employees who, as of that date—May 27—had been either laid off or had their hours dramatically reduced directly as a consequence of SARS.

These workers, particularly those in the hotel industry, are represented by the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees Union. That union, for a number of weeks now, has called on the city government, the provincial government and the federal government to put in place a package to try and support these 16,000 workers in this city who have either lost their job or seen their hours dramatically reduced directly as a result of SARS. Frankly, the only level of government that has responded has been the city government. Kudos to them for recognizing the importance of these employees in this city as well.

Neither this Conservative government nor the federal Liberal government have done anything to respond to a very concrete proposal which has come forward from that union. The proposal is an emergency one which establishes a work-share-while-learning program that would assist impacted workers in Toronto's hotel, restaurant and hospitality industry. The program being advocated would provide full replacement income, with the opportunity to train while maintaining full availability for work. It would build on an existing HRDC work-sharing program, which would then be topped up by the province.

I don't understand why this provincial government nor the federal government have not responded to this proposal from HERE. Kudos again to the city of Toronto which has, and kudos to the city because they've actually written to both the federal and provincial governments encouraging them to support these workers and accept the proposal that has been outlined.

I say to the provincial government, which talks about assuming its responsibilities, where are you when it comes to supporting those workers who have been dramatically affected by SARS in this city too? Yes, we should be compensating those people who were sick and those people who were in quarantine, but there are thousands of other workers who have been adversely affected by SARS and neither this government nor the federal government have done a single thing.

We have also advocated, as a political party, for some other changes that should and could be implemented by both the federal and provincial governments with respect to SARS. For the federal government, for example, we advocated the elimination of the two-week waiting period for EI for all workers impacted by SARS, not just those who contracted SARS. We advocated lowering the number of hours of work needed in the previous 52 weeks so most hotel workers could qualify. We also advocated extending benefit periods so low-wage workers don't run

out of EI in only a few months. Those are some of the things the feds could do, should do and haven't done.

Here are some of the things the province could do if it was really upholding its responsibility: for example, provide emergency funding to protect laid-off workers' medical benefits; training programs like the one advocated by HERE for hospitality workers who have been laid off; emergency protections from evictions for laid-off hospitality workers and other workers impacted by SARS who are unable to pay the rent; and changes to funding to the Ontario disaster relief plan so that smaller businesses that may not be assisted by other plans can receive relief.

If both levels of government were really interested in helping these employees, these are some of the concrete solutions we propose that could be implemented, which would truly make a difference. We call on both the federal and the provincial governments to implement some of those changes to protect these workers who are in our city as well.

If the government of the day, this government in Ontario, also wanted to live up to its responsibilities regarding SARS, then this government would immediately call a public inquiry under the Public Inquiries Act and ensure that there would be a full and fulsome investigation of everything that has happened around this really difficult situation.

I note that it was our leader, Howard Hampton, who on April 15 first wrote to the Premier, to Dr Colin D'Cunha and to Dr James Young and encouraged all three to support and in fact implement a public inquiry in the province of Ontario. I have a copy of the letter that was sent by our leader, Howard Hampton, to Ernie Eves. I also have the copies for Dr James Young and for Dr Colin D'Cunha.

At the outset, we say very quickly, "The last few weeks have been extraordinarily difficult ones for many Ontarians." People have lost loved ones. Thousands of others are under quarantine. They were then; they are again. Thousands of health care workers have worked endless hours to try and contain the outbreak, as they are doing for a second time now.

We have expressed our condolences to these workers and to the families who have lost loved ones, but also say we believe that the people of Ontario are very interested in getting to the bottom of what has happened with respect to SARS and that the people of Ontario are looking to this Premier for assurance that there would be an independent commission of inquiry under the Public Inquiries Act to ensure that we learn from this experience. "We must be assured that if an outbreak like this occurs again, our system will be even better prepared."

"Many questions are being asked by experts and health care providers and by many of our constituents about how prepared Ontario has been and what other jurisdictions may have done differently. I believe the following issues should be included in the commission of inquiry:

"The capacity of our public health units to respond and the effect on their ability to carry out other important prevention programs;

"Ontario's infection control capacity;

"The capacity of our health care system—in particular our hospitals—to cope with the additional burden of SARS;

"The coordination and speed with which directives and alerts were issued by the Ministry of Health.

"Jurisdiction over private clinics (independent health facilities) during this crisis;

"The technical and scientific capacity of the public health branch of the Ministry of Health, particularly the capacity of our public labs;

"The role of the federal government in providing support for public health."

Those were the points that we outlined, very specific points that should be looked at in a public inquiry. There are many others that could be looked at. That was sent on April 15 to the Premier.

I want to go through some of those points to tell you why I think it is critical that we have a public inquiry that allows for people to be subpoenaed and talk about what they knew and when; for information to be subpoenaed so that all the information that is relevant to this dossier is out in the public; for protection for health care workers who want to come forward so that they won't be fired, dismissed or disciplined by their employer if they come forward and have something to say about their involvement or things they knew with respect to SARS.

I think that's the direction we should be going. The Premier, instead, originally talked about only a review. In the last two days, as we have continued to talk about the need for a full public inquiry, he is now talking about a public process. I don't believe for one moment that a public process is good enough, and I'll deal with that near the end of my remarks. But I want to go through some of the points that I think must absolutely be addressed in a public inquiry, concerns that people have about how SARS was dealt with.

I want to say at the top that our concern has nothing to do those health care workers who have, against tremendous odds, provided tremendous service to the people who live in the province of Ontario. Many of those hospital workers have worked hours and hours, week after week, without danger pay, putting themselves in life-threatening positions. They have done a tremendous job.

But frankly, the system failed them. The system failed them in a way that I think relates directly back to cuts that this government has made to hospitals and to public health units. That is why we have focused particularly on the capacity of public health units and hospitals to respond to crises like this.

Let me deal first with the capacity of Ontario's public health units to respond to SARS and carry out other important prevention programs. The fact of the matter is, this government has downloaded enormous public health responsibilities on to public health units and municipi-

palities and has not provided the corresponding funding to do that. That is a fact that cannot be disputed.

Even with those programs that the government claims it funds 100%, the fact of the matter is that it doesn't, and individual public health units and municipalities are subsidizing the cost of what are supposed to be provincially funded and provincially mandated programs—Healthy Babies, for example. In my community, the public health unit subsidizes the cost of the Healthy Babies program because the full cost is not covered by this government. In my community and in many others, public health units and municipalities subsidize the cost of the flu shot, because this government does not provide 100% funding to cover the flu shot program—it just does not. Again this year, our municipality and many others are going to cover 50% of the cost of most of the programs for West Nile, because, again, this government is only providing 50 cents on the dollar to deal with a very serious public health issue that I have no doubt this Legislature is going to be dealing with later on, as we have people who get sick or die from that.

1710

The fact of the matter is, this government has a lot to answer for, because it has downloaded responsibilities on to public health units and has not provided them with the funding they need to do the job they're supposed to do. Even with those programs for which the government claims they are providing 100% of the dollars, they in fact are not, and health unit after health unit is subsidizing what are supposed to be 100% provincially funded programs.

I think Dr Sheela Basrur, who is the Toronto medical officer of health, said it most eloquently. She was interviewed on April 28 on *The National*, and said the following with respect to Toronto having to pull out all the stops in order to deal with SARS. She said very clearly that Toronto had to divert money from programs like STDs and TB to meet the need. "It's like ripping the bandage off of one wound to stop the bleeding of another one."

This is one of the reasons we feel it's imperative that we look at the capacity of our public health units, because I think they're being grossly underfunded by this government. That has been the case for a couple of years now, and it has left them in a position where they have to scramble—and I mean scramble—in order to deal with an outbreak like SARS. I remember being at a briefing at the Ministry of Health and hearing the deputy say very clearly that he was aware that Toronto public health was having to hire from across the country in order to have the staff in place to try to deal with SARS. That clearly to me is an indication that this government is failing abysmally in supporting public health in this province.

We also have said very clearly we want to look at, as a second point, the capacity of Ontario to control infection. I want to read into the record a memo we got from one Dr Ron Gold, who is professor emeritus of pediatrics, faculty of medicine, University of Toronto, and former chief, division of infectious diseases, Hospital for Sick

Children. He sent this memo to us on April 29. This has to do with our concern around our ability to control infection. He said the following:

"What will be done to ensure that there is no other failure by the Ontario Ministry of Health to issue timely warnings to medical facilities throughout Ontario of the risk of importation of a new infection such as SARS?" That's his question. This is someone who knows all about infectious disease.

"News of the outbreak of an unexplained phenomenon in Hong Kong was posted on the Web site of ProMED-mail and distributed via e-mail ... February 12 and 15. ProMED-mail is a program of the International Society for Infectious Diseases which collects reports of outbreaks of human, animal and plant infections around the world. When the first reports of the unexplained 'phenomenon' which became SARS were posted, the health ministry in BC notified all hospitals and health care facilities of the possibility of a traveller from Hong Kong arriving 'with' this new infection. When the first case (and subsequent cases) presented to the emergency department of a Vancouver hospital, the patient was immediately isolated and managed with infection-control procedures appropriate for a respiratory infection.

"No such warning was issued by the Ontario Ministry of Health. Failure to warn Toronto hospitals of the possibility of importation of SARS resulted in the subsequent spread of the epidemic after the first case was hospitalized and not properly isolated on March 7...."

Dr Gold concluded: "Vancouver (and Vietnam) provided good examples of how such imported infections should be handled in order to prevent epidemics; Toronto (and Ontario) provided an excellent example of how not to do it."

I think that is a clear condemnation of the lack of response by the Ministry of Health to warn Ontario hospitals of the possibility of infection, particularly with a traveller from Hong Kong presenting with pneumonia-like symptoms.

Why is it that the BC Ministry of Health was able to get the information from ProMED and make sure their hospitals and facilities were aware, so that appropriate actions were taken, and our Ministry of Health failed so abysmally to respond appropriately? I think that speaks volumes about the ministry's failing in this regard and the ongoing failure of the hospital system to respond to this infectious disease because they weren't warned early enough by the ministry about what to look for and what was happening elsewhere in the world. That's why we want to take a look at Ontario's capacity to control infection. I think it's clear that the Ministry of Health fell flat on its face when it came to ensuring Ontario hospitals were warned about this. They were warned in British Columbia; hospitals were not warned here.

With respect to the points we want looked at in a public inquiry, the next has to do with the capacity of Ontario's health system, hospitals in particular, to cope with the additional burden of SARS. I want to go back to Ron Gold's memo, because he also addresses this. He

asks, "What will be done to ensure that all hospitals in Ontario have adequate funds to hire the recommended number of certified infection control nurse practitioners?"

He says: "Current recommendations call for one infection control practitioner for every 220-250 beds in a hospital. Very few Ontario hospitals meet this goal. Such practitioners are essential for proper surveillance of hospital-acquired infections as well as for proper implementation of infection control policies and procedures and, most importantly, for ongoing training of all hospital workers in infection control practices. Without proper infection control, spread of infections such as SARS is inevitable.

"Continued shortchanging of public health, in particular, and of the health care system in general is a recipe for disaster."

Now, this was written in April, so he may change his view with respect to the next sentence. At that time, April 29, he said: "Fortunately, SARS has proven to be not highly contagious," as we first feared, "and Ontario escaped with only a few hundred cases. Unless the situation improves, we will not be so lucky the next time."

I just want to remind you of Dr Gold's credentials: professor emeritus of pediatrics, faculty of medicine, University of Toronto, and former chief, division of infectious disease, Hospital for Sick Children. I think this is someone who has some authority in this regard, who understands infections and Ontario's public health system, and who clearly has a lot to say that's very negative about how this government handled SARS.

Continuing on the capacity of the hospital system, in particular, to deal with this situation, let me quote a few other people, just to make the point. I quoted Sheila Basur already, specifically when she talked about cuts to public health and how Toronto public health in particular were scrambling to try to meet the needs. She also said on *The National* on 28 April, with respect to the SARS epidemic here in Toronto, "What it has really shown, though, is that our health is only as good as the weakest link in the system, and unfortunately, it's really revealed the shortcomings in hospital infection control resources. Often they're the first casualty for cost containment when hospital cutbacks or public health cutbacks have to be made, and the weaknesses show up very, very quickly when you have a rapidly transmissible disease like this."

Further, and I'm quoting: "It's called surge capacity, and that is something that has been systematically stripped from the system as we have restructured hospitals, as we have restructured the health care systems that exist. So the ability of public health, of hospitals, of governments in general to respond to an unforeseen crisis of large proportions is dramatically reduced when we have already cut ourselves to the bone." That is the reality of the situation in the province right now.

1720

Let me also quote Dr William Bowie, an infectious disease specialist at the University of British Columbia who came to Toronto during the first weeks of the

outbreak to try to assist here. He said: "Ontario does not seem able to pull together an integrated effort, either for pandemic planning or to deal with bio-terrorism. It's gotten progressively worse. Advice has been ignored for a long time."

That is another reason why we call on this government to have a full public inquiry, so that people like this who have expertise in this field can come forward and tell us what has to be done, finally, to restore the public health system and the hospital system so we are not put in the position we have been with the SARS crisis and so that hospital workers aren't again put in the position they have been, to go to extraordinary effort to provide quality care.

We also feel very strongly that we should be looking at the speed with which directives and alerts were issued to hospitals in Ontario by the Ministry of Health. What is clear is that despite the first case presenting himself at an Ontario hospital on March 7, it wasn't until March 27 that the first directives went out from the Ministry of Health to acute care hospitals telling them what procedures they should put in place to deal with SARS. So we have the first patient who presents at an Ontario hospital on March 7, who ends up sitting out in emergency with other people for well over 24 hours, and it is not until 20 days later that the ministry finally releases to acute care hospitals what they are supposed to do with respect to SARS.

People need to ask questions about why there was a 20-day delay from the first patient presenting himself at a hospital. People should ask why British Columbia hospitals were warned and responded promptly and properly and Ontario hospitals did not. There were also very specific directives that were sent out to the Simcoe county hospital, and those occurred two days after the March 27 directives.

So I think there are some very legitimate concerns people have and some very legitimate questions that have to be raised about what was going on at the Ministry of Health that directives to hospitals were not released until 20 days after the first patient presented at an Ontario hospital with SARS—20 days later. No wonder people got sick. No wonder people died. No wonder thousands of people had to be quarantined. And we're doing it all again. The Ministry of Health has to answer for why there was such an extraordinary delay from the first presentation of a patient to finally, 20 days later, getting some directives to hospitals about what to do, what to look for and how to respond.

We also have concerns, as I said, about private labs and independent health facilities. What kind of directives were they getting? Who was monitoring what was happening there? Who was responsible if there was a problem? They are independent health facilities, so they are private clinics.

We also want to look very specifically at the technical and scientific capacity of Ontario's public labs, particularly the public health branch of Ontario's Ministry of Health. I think that what an individual who worked at the

public lab said about the government on May 3 is very telling—it was reported in the *Globe and Mail*. Dr Neal denHollander is the former head of the province's lab standards and development section. He resigned in 2001, probably about the same time the government was busy getting rid of scientists who were actually working on tests for West Nile. He said: "I saw the public health labs and public health units being underfunded and under-supported and being dismantled from the inside out. I didn't want to be a part of that."

I remind you that this is the former head of the provincial lab standards and development sections, someone who understands a little bit about the provincial lab and the important role of public health in the health care system. He got out. He left the government because he saw what was happening and didn't want to be a part of it.

We should be hearing from Dr denHollander and other people who were forced out of the public labs, including some of those five scientists, about what they saw happening in terms of the continuing cuts to programs that were extremely important, which were occurring at the provincial lab, continuing cuts to programs that were extremely important. So again, we said that should be part of an independent inquiry.

I should just go back to the capacity of hospitals to cope, because there's one other issue that I neglected to mention. That has to do with the ability of nurses to cope with what has gone on with respect to SARS and what may happen in the future if we have other similar outbreaks. It was astonishing to me, just absolutely astonishing, to read in the paper that Tony Clement said that it wasn't until the outbreak of SARS that he finally realized how many nurses were working part-time or casual hours in the province. I was absolutely astounded that he would make such an obscene, asinine comment, because it really was.

Here's what he said: "Two things surprised me from the get-go when SARS became a reality in Ontario: one was the amount of 'casualization' that had occurred for nursing staff." For those on the government side who say he didn't say that, there's the quote out of the newspaper.

Where has he been? Where has the man been? Where has the government been when casualization and part-time work has been underway? You've got just over half of Ontario's estimated 80,000 nurses who work full-time. The rest are part-time or casual positions that offer neither benefits nor stability.

The government has been clearly told. The Registered Nurses Association of Ontario, beginning in 1998, released its first report highlighting this problem, highlighting for the government the problem that too many employers in this province were forcing nurses to work part-time, were only giving them casual hours; that that wasn't good for the health care system; and that if they were given the opportunity and the choice, they would be quite happy to work full-time. But because of this government's cuts to hospitals, because of this government's changes at community care access centres that

now allow for competitive bidding, many of these full-time nurses weren't able to maintain their full-time positions any more and were working in two and three different hospitals just to cobble together a full-time position. So obviously what happened through SARS was, as these nurses who used to work in two and three hospitals went under quarantine, they weren't available to work in two or three hospitals any more, were they?

Then we have the obscene situation where hospitals are bringing in agency nurses at 100 bucks an hour to replace those part-time nurses who perhaps were getting paid \$25 an hour. No kidding. We have huge costs to cover now; I guess so, when we're paying these agency nurses three times more instead of guaranteeing that we have full-time nurses working in the Ontario hospital system.

Where has the government been? Where has Minister Clement been? How could he possibly say anything so stupid in public—that he didn't realize the problem until SARS? He'd better start reading some of those reports and perhaps he'd better get down to the business of doing something about ensuring that nurses who want to work full-time can work full-time in the Ontario health system. What's what we should be doing.

Do you know what else this government should be doing? I note that they're going to cover the hospitals' costs—those hospitals that paid \$100 an hour for those agency nurses. How come all those nurses who are on staff, who worked for 10 weeks straight at their regular pay of \$25, are not getting top-up pay? How come we're not paying them more for the work they did, day in and day out? Instead, they're going to get \$25 and the nurses who came in at 100 bucks an hour a pop are going to get covered for \$100 and the hospitals are going to get covered for that. Where's the justice in that? Where's the fairness in that? What message does that send to full-time nurses? Do you know the message it sends? They should quit their part-time jobs or their full-time jobs. They should go and work for an agency, because they're going to make 100 bucks an hour. If SARS continues, they're going to make huge amounts of money working for an agency at \$100 an hour. That's the message we send: quit your job at the hospital where you've worked for 10 or 12 years; go and work for an agency because you're going to get paid 100 bucks an hour all through this crisis.

The government now should be telling employers in the hospital sector, in community care access centres and in public health it is time that those people who want to work full-time in nursing have a chance to have a full-time job in this province, and that should happen now. They should get benefits and they should get pensions because that's the right thing to do in Ontario.

If the government really wants to assume the responsibility that it talked about in this motion today, then the minister should be on his feet tomorrow making an announcement about what he is going to do to ensure that nurses who want to work full-time in this province can

work full-time and provide a benefit to the population in Ontario.

1730

I just want to make one more point and then my colleague from Timmins-James Bay is going to speak as well. The other point I want to make—because I've gone through specifically those things we think should be raised in a public inquiry—is, it's not good enough, not at all, not whatsoever, for the government to say we will have some kind of review about what happened around SARS or some kind of public process. What we need is a public inquiry, because information can be subpoenaed, people can be subpoenaed to come and talk about what they saw, what they knew, what they did and who didn't do what they were supposed to. People will also be protected with whistle-blower protection so that they won't be fearful about coming forward, fearful that they might be intimidated or lose their job.

We asked yesterday, New Democrats did, and we asked the Minister of Health again today why he won't have whistle-blower protection with respect to a public inquiry so that nurses and other health care workers can come forward and have their say without fear of being intimidated by their employer. The minister said, "Give me one example where a health care worker has been intimidated by their employer, and we'll do something about it."

I'm going to give the minister an example, because he didn't do anything about it when he had every opportunity to. This is an article from the *Toronto Star*, Friday, March 7. It was written by Theresa Boyle. "Woman Fired After Questioning Surgery Waits.

"An employee from the Toronto-Sunnybrook Regional Cancer Centre has been fired after expressing concerns about long waits for cancer surgery."

This poor woman, Virginia Wooland, was at a press conference that Minister Clement held at Sunnybrook on February 10, when he was there talking about a boost in cancer funding. During a question-and-answer period, Ms Wooland asked the minister about long waits for cancer surgery. After she asked her question to the minister she was subsequently approached by reporters for comments. She said the following, "They [patients] are diagnosed with cancer and that in itself is a lot of stress. Then they have to wait to find out, well, when will my time be to take out the cancer. It's additional stress," she said at the time. She also noted that her own mother has cancer."

Here's what happened: "Garth Matheson, director of regional planning for Cancer Care Ontario," an agency of this government, "tried to stop reporters from interviewing her, saying they should speak only to official centre spokespeople.

"But Donna Kline, vice-president of public affairs for Cancer Care Ontario, intervened, saying Wooland could talk to reporters so long as it was clear she was offering her own personal opinion and not speaking on behalf of the centre.

"Three days later, Wooland was called into the centre's human resources department and given a letter, saying she was fired.

"The letter states Wooland was fired for 'performance reasons.' It cites 'continuing concerns regarding your behaviour, the most recent incident being on February 10, 2003,'" when she had the audacity to ask the minister a question when he was at a press conference at her centre. OK?

The letter also stated she "violated the code of conduct of Cancer Care Ontario," a provincial government agency, "which says that employees can 'not be involved in any behaviour on or off the premises which impact negatively on CCO's public image and trust.'" Can you imagine? This is an agency of this Conservative government.

"Wooland was confounded by the allegations, arguing she had a good track record as an employee.

"I have nothing on my file. I've never been pulled into the HR [human resources] office and been told that there's a problem," said the mother of two."

She is taking legal action against the centre. A surgeon at the centre for whom she worked has retained a lawyer on her behalf. Here's a quote from the surgeon: "'I find this very disturbing,' said the surgeon, who has asked that his name not be published. He said Wooland's concerns about long waits for cancer surgery are well founded."

What did the Minister of Health do when this matter was brought to his attention, the fact that a woman from this cancer centre who had the audacity—imagine, the audacity—to ask him a question about waiting time for cancer treatment at his press conference and then she got fired? What did he say? His press secretary, Paul Cantin, said the minister could not comment on a personnel issue.

I heard this minister today stand in his place and say, "You give me an example of someone who's been intimidated or disciplined by their employer and we're going to deal with it." Well, where was Tony Clement when just two months ago Virginia Wooland got fired from the regional cancer centre at Sunnybrook because she dared to ask him a question at a press conference? Where was he then? Where is he now? He wants an example; he's got it. And what's he doing about it?

Here's a woman, a mother of two with an excellent track record whose lawsuit is being paid by a surgeon for whom she worked for at the centre. What kind of response did she get from him? Nothing. You wonder why we need whistle-blower protection? Here's a perfect, recent example of why we need whistle-blower protection. Because if this can happen to Virginia Wooland, it can happen to any other nurse or health care professional who would want to say something publicly about SARS.

So I say to the minister, stand in your place tomorrow and tell us what you're doing, now that we've raised the case of Virginia Wooland. Tell us what you're doing to get her job back at Cancer Care Ontario, an agency

funded by your government. And don't tell us that you have no comment because it's a personnel issue.

This is why we need whistle-blower protection. This is why we need a public inquiry that has whistle-blower protection. If we're ever going to get to the bottom of what happened around SARS—and I argue there were many failings in the system—then we have to guarantee health care workers that they're going to be protected when they come forward and tell what they knew, when they knew it, what they tried to do about it and who failed to respond to their concerns.

In conclusion, let me say today that the government comes forward with a resolution talking about how it's assumed its responsibility: you've done nothing for the 16,000 tourism and restaurant workers in this province who have lost their jobs or have suffered reduced hours as a direct impact of SARS. You've done zip, nada, for them. If the government really wants to assume its responsibility with respect to SARS, they will call a public inquiry so that we can get to the bottom of what happened around SARS and we can ensure that something like this never happens again.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): Just to pick up on the point that my colleague Ms Martel made, in the case of Virginia Wooland, it's interesting that the government, in this case the Minister of Health, says after the fact that the woman is fired, that he can't make any comments or intervene because this is a personnel matter. I would imagine he intervened when the woman made the comments and asked him questions at his press conference. He probably said something like, "Have her fired." If it wasn't him, certainly someone on his political staff gave the order. So if it was good enough for the minister or the political staff to have Virginia fired for having had the audacity—imagine—to ask the Minister of Health, a public official, a question at a press conference in a democratic society, I would think it is perfectly in order for the minister to comment after the fact that his office felt it was OK to have that woman fired.

I want to go through the motion quickly, because I think it's a rather interesting one. I'm at the age that I've got to put these glasses on. I'm really getting embarrassed. I've got to point out that there's all kinds of teachers here today. We say "hi" to you. We salute you. They are here because we are about to embark on the vote, a little bit later on, ordering teachers back to work, which we will be voting against. I wish I could speak about that at length, but the rules of the House don't allow me to do that. I have to stay to this debate. Speaker, you know I want to stay within the rules of the House. I do.

The motion says—

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): But before you do that, New Democrats have been firmly in solidarity with the teachers.

Mr Bisson: Certainly we've been firm in our support of the teachers on this particular issue. We think ordering teachers back to work, any kind of back-to-work, is kind

of stupid. And for the government to say that they're going to put legislation that says, "We're going to make it illegal for people to have work-to-rule campaigns," how would democracy work in the workplace if you can't have that? That's a whole other debate.

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: Thank you. It was very helpful.

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: Do you want some time on debate? How about I leave you a few minutes after, Mr Kormos, and you can help me out on that point? It's my 20 minutes. We have so much fun in this place sometimes.

This is a serious motion. I just want to get to it very quickly. Mr Eves says: "Be it resolved that:

"To recognize that Ontario's front-line health care workers, including nurses, doctors, public health officials, paramedics, lab technicians and scientists, have made heroic efforts to combat SARS"—it's so interesting to hear the government use that kind of language. Where have you guys been for the last eight years? You're the guys who made the cuts to health care that got us in this mess in the first place.

Interjections.

Mr Bisson: Don't look at me and say, "Ohhhh." That's the reality. You guys did the whole cut in health care. At the beginning in 1995, you did two major things: you cut budgets to hospitals—that's the public fact—and you closed hospital beds across this province. You tried to close the only francophone hospital in Ontario, l'hôpital Montfort. It took the public uprising of people across the province to try to fight back, and we won some battles on that. Nonetheless the public record is that you're the ones who took money out of the health care system in the first place.

1740

On public health, one of the first things this government did, and that we have to recognize, is that first of all they made cuts to public health, so that public health officials had less capacity to respond to public health issues in Ontario, and they downloaded programs on to the municipalities that were mandated by provincial legislation. Where we as a province said to the public health units, "You are mandated to have a flu immunization program," the province said, "We're pretty bright. We're going to make the municipalities pick up a share of that and oblige the public health units to collect the money from the municipalities."

I find it passing strange that Ernie Eves comes to this Legislature today and says, "We love nurses; we love doctors; we love public health care." You guys have a funny way to show it; it's like the way you're showing teachers that you love teachers. You say one thing in this place, but when it comes to actual legislation and practice over the last eight years it's completely opposite to what we're having in the debate today.

It goes on to say, "to recognize that Ontario has suffered tremendous economic consequences of the SARS outbreak"—we agree with you on that—"to recognize that the federal government"—and this is where it really

gets interesting; this is the crux of thing—"has yet to provide much-needed financial assistance to front-line health care workers who have worked so tirelessly to contain the outbreak and treat its victims."

Quit your whining. I remember you guys: Mike Harris and Ernie Eves and all the cabinet ministers who were then third party members from 1990 to 1995, and prior to that between 1987 and 1990. Every time the Peterson government or the Rae government got up and tried to get a better deal from the federal Tories, the Tory party would get up and say, "Quit your whining. It's your problem. You're in charge. Deal with it."

Now you come into this House, because you're on the eve of an election, and say, "Ohh, we're having such a problem in Ontario. Oh my God, the federal government just won't help us, so we can't respond to this SARS outbreak in Ontario in the way we'd like to." So you bring this resolution forward, calling on the federal government to provide immediate financial assistance, except the federal Liberals won't help you. Federally, we have 101 Liberals out of 103 seats. What have they done for Ontario? Get with the program. They've got other fish to fry. They're not interested in Ontario until we have another federal election.

I really get a little offended when I hear you guys whining about the federal government. I remember Ernie Eves. He was the third party House leader when we were in government. Bob Rae would get up and say, "We need to get a better deal from the federal government on health care." They used to give us 50-cent dollars, and they now give us 10-cent dollars on health care—that was created by both the Mulroney Tories and the Chrétien Liberals—

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): Eighteen cents.

Mr Bisson: Eighteen cents. Anyway, Ernie Eves, when he was the third party House leader, would get up and say to Bob Rae and to our health minister, "Stop your whining. It's your fault. Move on with it. This is the new reality."

Well, what's happened between the third party and going to government? Probably the polls. I think that's what happened. I think at this point the Conservatives are reading the polls rightly. They've looked at the tea leaves, called Environics and Ipsos and the rest of it, and they say Ontarians are not happy with this Conservative government and they want a change. So this government is scrambling, à la whatever—I can't come up with a nice word; it's not my fault—to try to find some way to resonate with voters, as in this SARS resolution saying, "We've got a problem in Ontario." We all agree. I don't think there's one member in Ontario who disagrees with the first part of your resolution that we have a problem and that we have health care workers who are working hard to try to deal with the issue. But somehow or other we need to have the federal government pony up or else we're not going to be able to do anything? I say, quit your whining. But the second point is, the reality is, guys, you've dropped the ball.

Hon Tim Hudak (Minister of Consumer and Business Services): On what?

Mr Bisson: You've dropped the ball. If you guys were a baseball team, you'd never get past first base right now. You just couldn't. You're thinking you're a bunch of shortstops and you're not even good catchers.

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: At least we can muster nine members on our team. We can put up a full field, New Democrats, nine of us strong, the best baseball team going.

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: That's another story, Peter.

I've just got to say—back to the point—that the government read the tea leaves. They looked at Environics and Ipsos-Reid, and they said, "Oh, Ernie, the people don't like us any more." So he came up with a program. He said, "Let's kick the teachers in the teeth, boom." Oh, that was going to be real popular. Just like you misread the last time you had a fight with teachers about, what, two or three years ago? It wasn't a strike. What was it called again?

Mr Kormos: Bill 160.

Mr Bisson: Yes, Bill 160. You misread that completely. People said, "Hey, you know, at the end of the day we don't understand all the details, but we know that teachers who go into the classroom work hard, do a good job of teaching our kids. We're getting tired of watching the government beat up teachers all the time."

As you're going into this particular issue, to the vote we're going to have later on that I can't talk to because we're not in that debate now—and I wish I was and was able to talk to the issue—I just say that you guys are misreading it. The public ain't with you on that. People are saying, "Listen, we don't know all of the details, but we're tired of the fight. We want to see a government come along that is going to try to find practical solutions to being able to deal with the issues of today and, more importantly, accepting responsibility," like this, here, **Public Power: Practical Solutions for Ontario.**

Mr Kormos: —back into the classroom, like Rozanski said.

Mr Bisson: Yes. Rozanski put the money back in. That's what we say in our platform. But what the people want is for government to take the responsibility. That's what they want. I don't think this motion, quite frankly, speaks to the ability of the Conservative government to accept the responsibility.

I've got to go through a couple of things in regard to this particular thing. My good colleague Ms Martel raises the issue in this debate about the call on the part of nurses and on the part of our leader, Howard Hampton, on the question of calling for a public inquiry about how the Ontario system has responded to the SARS issue. In questions that Mr Hampton has posed to the Minister of Health and the Premier, they're saying, "Oh, Howard, you don't know what you're talking about. We don't need whistle-blower legislation. Everything is fine."

Ms Martel, our health critic, raises issues where there have been cases where people have been fired for having reported things about what's going on within the system. That is why we say there needs to be whistle-blowing

protection legislation. The government says, "Well, you know, if you can show me one case of intimidation, then maybe you would have something."

Ms Martel raises that issue and I just want to add to it by saying this: every MPP in the opposition will know that every time we call a ministry office on an issue, be it Ag and Food, the Ministry of Natural Resources or the Ministry of Health—for a while bureaucrats were afraid to talk to us because they had been given word by the minister's office not to give information to MPPs. Thank God that has turned around, because most bureaucrats thought that was pretty silly and recognize that no matter which side of the House you sit on, MPPs have a duty to deal with issues as they relate to their constituents. But there was certainly a feeling within the civil service—and I've got to say it—about a year ago that they should not be talking to MPPs if they were in opposition. If bureaucrats had that feeling within the Ontario civil service, imagine how people within hospitals or other institutions feel about the whole issue of retaliating, should that person give inform that is contrary or out of step with the provincial government.

As my leader and as nurses have indicated, I think it's important that we have whistle-blower legislation to protect the ability of people to come forward and give information when they think there's a problem. For example, on the issue of SARS, if people felt there was an issue as far as how the public system responded, people within the system should be there feeling comfortable enough to come forward and give information about what they think should have been done. I don't see that as a bad thing; I see that as a way of strengthening our system. I just say to the government, if you want examples, there are all kinds of examples out there.

1750

The other thing I just want to say very quickly: I was having a discussion, I think it was this morning, with my daughter. My daughter is a nurse—three years of college, two years BNSc, and has worked in both public health and a health care system. She works at St Michael's Hospital here in Toronto. In a conversation I had with her this morning, she said, "What's the big issue at Queen's Park these days?" I said the big provincial issue is this legislation that you're about to bring in—we're going to order teachers back to work—and the whole SARS-West Nile issue. She made a comment to me. She said, "You know, Dad, at the end of the day, SARS is going to be around for a long time until they find a cure."

I just think to myself that this is a pretty scary thing, and it tells me that we've got to take this issue probably much more seriously than we are now. She's saying the reality is that once you have that type of infection come into the population, there's no way to really stop it entirely, short of some sort of miracle. It's going to be around for a while.

Certainly, the system has to be able to respond. Our public system has to have the dollars to be able to respond in a positive way to not only contain the outbreaks of SARS, but, quite frankly, to try to work toward

a cure with the international community so that we eliminate the threat altogether. I just thought that was an interesting point.

I just want to make one more point, because I know my good friend Mr Kormos would like a few minutes. I'll leave you more than six minutes. I've got to point out my good friend Mr Marchese, who was actually very ill today, is here today voting with us to support us on our issue in regard to voting with teachers. Unfortunately, Mr Marchese will not be able to speak. Believe it or not, he's got a throat infection.

Interjection: Hear, hear.

Mr Bisson: What do you mean, "Hear, hear"? I am just aghast that you would not want to hear Rosario Marchese, one of the golden orators of this Legislature, speak. I know he'd like to be able to speak today, but he's not feeling well.

I just want to end on this point. We also have another impending threat that's overlooking us this summer in this province, and that's the issue of West Nile. All I know is that if we, as a Legislature, don't find the means to make sure that we have the capacity within our health system to respond, it's not just SARS we're going to have to worry about this summer, it's the whole West Nile issue. Top that off with what's happening with the mad cow scare. This government is the one that got rid of meat inspectors in the province of Ontario and privatized many of the services that used to be done by the Ministry of Ag and Food. I just say to the government across the way, be careful where you're going, because you guys have created much of the mess that we find ourselves in.

I noted that my esteemed colleague Mr Kormos would like to have six minutes to speak, but I'll give him six more at 6:45.

The Acting Speaker: Order. Before the member for Niagara Centre begins his presentation, it is getting a little bit noisy in here. I would like to be able to hear the member for Niagara Centre.

Mr Kormos: You take a look at this resolution and you look at the motivation that's so obvious in the language of the resolution. This is the most insincere crap that this place has seen in a long time. Quite frankly, it's regrettable that the government has forced this type of partisan, politically motivated resolution on the House around so serious an issue as the SARS crisis, the incredible toll that it's taking on so many individuals, families and health professionals in the province of Ontario. I am beyond disappointed—not surprised, but beyond disappointed.

I tell you, New Democrats have no interest in playing the government's political game. We're far more interested in seeing a real, legitimate public inquiry in this province so that nursing professionals and other health care workers who have been out there on the front lines, in the trenches, can help us, as a provincial community, design systems that indeed protect our communities from similar events. It's naive to suspect that we will not be confronted again, as we were confronted now

for a far longer period of time than some spokespeople would have us believe.

There's still contemplation by the federal government of funding a Rolling Stones concert, in response to the real—

Interjection.

Mr Kormos: Well, there's still a contemplation by federal Liberals about funding a Rolling Stones concert. How stupid. How dumb. Ten million dollars. That's a lot of nurses' salaries. That's a lot of public health money and, quite frankly, as I told you before, I've got Walter Ostanek living in St Catharines. He'd do it for a couple of thousand and he's won more Grammys than the Rolling Stones ever have; and I tell you, he would draw a bigger crowd. We don't need bread and circuses to distract us from the crisis that our health care system has been confronted with.

What has been illustrated very clearly is that the health care system has been so grossly underfunded—public health as well as the hospital care system, nursing and other professions—so dramatically underfunded that we are no longer capable of responding to—and I put it to you that this is in many respects a modest crisis. One can contemplate scenarios which are even more demanding on the health care system and the public health system than this SARS crisis has been.

What's regrettable is the denial of the realities around, let's say, 12,000 workers in the hospitality sector here in Toronto who have lost jobs. The Premier's huge announcement, his photo op at the end of the hall the other day, didn't take into consideration those workers in non-health-care vocations who have lost jobs. It didn't take into consideration the couple that runs the mom-and-pop operation, the coffee shop down at the Welland County General Hospital. You see, that coffee shop was privatized; these people run it as a private business. As a result of the quarantine, for four or five weeks they had no business and had to lay off staff. They're now in the red in terms of their annual revenues. So you see, the scope of the impact is far broader than the government wants to acknowledge.

Rather than having a meaningful debate around how we prepare ourselves more adequately as a provincial community to respond to health crises—SARS and others—this government wants to rush and accelerate this debate, so they can move into “beat up on teachers, force them back into the classroom” mode.

Why is it that this government is interested in telling the Catholic board of education here in Toronto to get back to the bargaining table? Because that would have solved the impasse. There was no impasse. There was a refusal on the part of the board to negotiate, because they knew they had this government waiting, ready and prepared to play the political game and manipulate the strings of the marionettes. That's what they are on the board: they're this government's marionettes. I condemn the whole gang of them. We haven't seen one person speak out from that Catholic board. Where are the people

with integrity? Where are the people blowing the whistle on that board's lack of good faith in the course of locking out teachers? We're going to hear, “Oh, I didn't vote for the lockout.” Well, where are you now? A lot of good it's going to do after the fact, trying to recover politically by saying, “Oh, I didn't vote for the lockout of teachers.” Well damn it, somebody did. Clearly a majority did, and others who didn't, didn't have the guts or the gonads to stand up and blow the whistle on the inherent corruption in that board in collaborating with this government in its agenda to deny teachers the right to collectively bargain, the right to negotiate contracts, the right, in the case of these Catholic teachers, to parity with other teachers.

Good grief. Teachers actually went to the board and said, “We'll voluntarily enter into arbitration.” The board, cocky and insincere, they being but Tory hacks, all of them, working to complete this government's agenda, denied—

Mr Maves: Carnevale's a Liberal.

Mr Kormos: Well, exactly. Carnevale's a Liberal, as are the whole gang of them: Liberal and Tory, collaborating with this government to deny teachers here in Toronto and across this province the right to fairly and collectively bargain.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. This completes the time allocated for debate.

Mr Smitherman has moved that the resolution be amended by striking out the last sentence and replacing it with, “Call on all levels of government to live up to their responsibilities by doing more than just announcing funding, but actually sending the financial assistance promised, without delay, to those so keenly affected by SARS in Ontario.”

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All in favour will say “aye.”

All opposed will say “nay.”

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1800 to 1805.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour will please stand one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Agostino, Dominic	Dombrowsky, Leona	McLeod, Lyn
Bartolucci, Rick	Duncan, Dwight	McMeekin, Ted
Bisson, Gilles	Gerretsen, John	Parsons, Ernie
Boyer, Claudette	Gravelle, Michael	Patten, Richard
Bradley, James J.	Hampton, Howard	Peters, Steve
Bryant, Michael	Hoy, Pat	Phillips, Gerry
Caplan, David	Kennedy, Gerard	Prue, Michael
Churley, Marilyn	Kormos, Peter	Pupatello, Sandra
Cleary, John C.	Kwinter, Monte	Ramsay, David
Colle, Mike	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Sergio, Mario
Cordiano, Joseph	Marchese, Rosario	Smitherman, George
Crozier, Bruce	Martel, Shelley	Sorbara, Greg
Curling, Alvin	Martin, Tony	
Di Cocco, Caroline	McGuinty, Dalton	

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed will please stand one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Guzzo, Garry J.	Mushinski, Marilyn
Baird, John R.	Hardeman, Ernie	Newman, Dan
Barrett, Toby	Hastings, John	O'Toole, John
Beaubien, Marcel	Hudak, Tim	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Chudleigh, Ted	Jackson, Cameron	Runciman, Robert W.
Clark, Brad	Johns, Helen	Sampson, Rob
Clement, Tony	Johnson, Bert	Spina, Joseph
Coburn, Brian	Kells, Morley	Sterling, Norman W.
Cunningham, Dianne	Klees, Frank	Stewart, R. Gary
DeFaria, Carl	Marland, Margaret	Stockwell, Chris
Dunlop, Garfield	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tascona, Joseph N.
Ecker, Janet	Maves, Bart	Tsubouchi, David H.
Elliott, Brenda	Mazzilli, Frank	Turnbull, David
Eves, Ernie	McDonald, AL	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Flaherty, Jim	Miller, Norm	Wilson, Jim
Galt, Doug	Molinari, Tina R.	Witmer, Elizabeth
Gilchrist, Steve	Munro, Julia	Wood, Bob
Gill, Raminder	Murdoch, Bill	Young, David

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 40; the nays are 54.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

Mr Eves has moved government notice of motion number 28.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Same vote reversed? No.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1810 to 1815.

The Acting Speaker: Will members please take their seats.

Mr Eves has moved government notice of motion number 28.

All those in favour will stand one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Guzzo, Garry J.	Mushinski, Marilyn
Baird, John R.	Hardeman, Ernie	Newman, Dan
Barrett, Toby	Hastings, John	O'Toole, John
Beaubien, Marcel	Hudak, Tim	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Chudleigh, Ted	Jackson, Cameron	Runciman, Robert W.
Clark, Brad	Johns, Helen	Sampson, Rob
Clement, Tony	Johnson, Bert	Spina, Joseph
Coburn, Brian	Kells, Morley	Sterling, Norman W.
Cunningham, Dianne	Klees, Frank	Stewart, R. Gary
DeFaria, Carl	Marland, Margaret	Stockwell, Chris
Dunlop, Garfield	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tascona, Joseph N.
Ecker, Janet	Maves, Bart	Tsubouchi, David H.
Elliott, Brenda	Mazzilli, Frank	Turnbull, David
Eves, Ernie	McDonald, AL	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Flaherty, Jim	Miller, Norm	Wilson, Jim
Galt, Doug	Molinari, Tina R.	Witmer, Elizabeth
Gilchrist, Steve	Munro, Julia	Wood, Bob
Gill, Raminder	Murdoch, Bill	Young, David

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Agostino, Dominic	Di Cocco, Caroline	McMeekin, Ted
Bartolucci, Rick	Dombrowsky, Leona	Parsons, Ernie
Boyer, Claudette	Duncan, Dwight	Patten, Richard
Bradley, James J.	Gerretsen, John	Peters, Steve
Bryant, Michael	Gravelle, Michael	Phillips, Gerry
Caplan, David	Hoy, Pat	Pupatello, Sandra
Cleary, John C.	Kennedy, Gerard	Ramsay, David
Colle, Mike	Kwinter, Monte	Sergio, Mario
Cordiano, Joseph	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Smitherman, George
Crozier, Bruce	McGuinty, Dalton	Sorbara, Greg
Curling, Alvin	McLeod, Lyn	

Clerk of the House: The ayes are 54; the nays are 32.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Report continues in volume B.

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McMeekin, Bill Murdoch, Wayne Wettlaufer
Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

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of Ontario**

Fourth Session, 37th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Quatrième session, 37^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 3 June 2003

Mardi 3 juin 2003

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Greffier
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 3 June 2003

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 3 juin 2003

Report continued from volume A.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BACK TO SCHOOL (TORONTO CATHOLIC ELEMENTARY) AND EDUCATION AND PROVINCIAL SCHOOLS NEGOTIATIONS AMENDMENT ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 PRÉVOYANT LE RETOUR À L'ÉCOLE (SECTEUR ÉLÉMENTAIRE DU CONSEIL CATHOLIQUE DE TORONTO) ET MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'ÉDUCATION ET LA LOI SUR LA NÉGOCIATION COLLECTIVE DANS LES ÉCOLES PROVINCIALES

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 29, 2003, on the motion for second reading of Bill 28, An Act to resolve a labour dispute between the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association and the Toronto Catholic District School Board and to amend the Education Act and the Provincial Schools Negotiations Act / Projet de loi 28, Loi visant à régler le conflit de travail opposant l'Association des enseignantes et des enseignants catholiques anglo-ontariens et le conseil scolaire de district appelé Toronto Catholic District School Board et modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation et la Loi sur la négociation collective dans les écoles provinciales.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Pursuant to the order of the House dated June 2, 2003, I am now required to put the question.

'Mr Clark has moved second reading of Bill 28, An Act to resolve a labour dispute between the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association and the Toronto Catholic District School Board and to amend the Education Act and the Provincial Schools Negotiations Act.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

OF Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1819 to 1824.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Guzzo, Garry J.	Mushinski, Marilyn
Baird, John R.	Hardeman, Ernie	Newman, Dan
Barrett, Toby	Hastings, John	O'Toole, John
Beaubien, Marcel	Hudak, Tim	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Chudleigh, Ted	Jackson, Cameron	Runciman, Robert W.
Clark, Brad	Johns, Helen	Sampson, Rob
Clement, Tony	Johnson, Bert	Spina, Joseph
Coburn, Brian	Kells, Morley	Sterling, Norman W.
Cunningham, Dianne	Klees, Frank	Stewart, R. Gary
DeFaria, Carl	Marland, Margaret	Stockwell, Chris
Dunlop, Garfield	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tascona, Joseph N.
Ecker, Janet	Maves, Bart	Tsubouchi, David H.
Elliott, Brenda	Mazzilli, Frank	Turnbull, David
Eves, Ernie	McDonald, AL	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Flaherty, Jim	Miller, Norm	Wilson, Jim
Galt, Doug	Molinari, Tina R.	Witmer, Elizabeth
Gilchrist, Steve	Munro, Julia	Wood, Bob
Gill, Raminder	Murdoch, Bill	Young, David

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Agostino, Dominic	Dombrowsky, Leona	McLeod, Lyn
Bartolucci, Rick	Duncan, Dwight	McMeekin, Ted
Bisson, Gilles	Gerretsen, John	Parsons, Ernie
Boyer, Claudette	Gravelle, Michael	Patten, Richard
Bradley, James J.	Hampton, Howard	Peters, Steve
Bryant, Michael	Hoy, Pat	Phillips, Gerry
Caplan, David	Kennedy, Gerard	Prue, Michael
Churley, Marilyn	Kormos, Peter	Pupatello, Sandra
Cleary, John C.	Kwinter, Monte	Ramsay, David
Colle, Mike	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Sergio, Mario
Cordiano, Joseph	Marchese, Rosario	Smitherman, George
Crozier, Bruce	Martel, Shelley	Sorbara, Greg
Curling, Alvin	Martin, Tony	
Di Cocco, Caroline	McGuinty, Dalton	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 54; the nays are 40.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

**BACK TO SCHOOL
(TORONTO CATHOLIC ELEMENTARY)
AND EDUCATION AND PROVINCIAL
SCHOOLS NEGOTIATIONS
AMENDMENT ACT, 2003**

**LOI DE 2003 PRÉVOYANT LE RETOUR
À L'ÉCOLE (SECTEUR ÉLÉMENTAIRE DU
CONSEIL CATHOLIQUE DE TORONTO)
ET MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR
L'ÉDUCATION ET LA LOI SUR
LA NÉGOCIATION COLLECTIVE DANS
LES ÉCOLES PROVINCIALES**

Mr Clark, on behalf of Mr Eves, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 28, An Act to resolve a labour dispute between the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association and the Toronto Catholic District School Board and to amend the Education Act and the Provincial Schools Negotiations Act / Projet de loi 28, Loi visant à régler le conflit de travail opposant l'Association des enseignantes et des enseignants catholiques anglo-ontariens et le conseil scolaire de district appelé Toronto Catholic District School Board et modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation et la Loi sur la négociation collective dans les écoles provinciales.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Pursuant to the order of the House dated June 2, 2003, I am now required to put the question.

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1827 to 1832.

The Acting Speaker: Order. Those in the galleries have to understand that you are guests here. We appreciate your assistance during our proceedings. No one can participate other than members here on the floor, so we appreciate your help.

Mr Clark has moved third reading of Bill 28. All those in favour will rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Guzzo, Garry J.	Mushinski, Marilyn
Baird, John R.	Hardeman, Ernie	Newman, Dan
Barrett, Toby	Hastings, John	O'Toole, John
Beaubien, Marcel	Hudak, Tim	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Chudleigh, Ted	Jackson, Cameron	Runciman, Robert W.
Clark, Brad	Johns, Helen	Sampson, Rob
Clement, Tony	Johnson, Bert	Spina, Joseph
Coburn, Brian	Kells, Morley	Sterling, Norman W.
Cunningham, Dianne	Klees, Frank	Stewart, R. Gary
DeFaria, Carl	Marland, Margaret	Stockwell, Chris
Dunlop, Garfield	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tascona, Joseph N.
Ecker, Janet	Maves, Bart	Tsubouchi, David H.
Elliott, Brenda	Mazzilli, Frank	Turnbull, David
Eves, Ernie	McDonald, AL	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Flaherty, Jim	Miller, Norm	Wilson, Jim
Galt, Doug	Molinari, Tina R.	Witmer, Elizabeth
Gilchrist, Steve	Munro, Julia	Wood, Bob
Gill, Raminder	Murdoch, Bill	Young, David

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Agostino, Dominic	Dombrowsky, Leona	McLeod, Lyn
Bartolucci, Rick	Duncan, Dwight	McMeekin, Ted
Bisson, Gilles	Gerretsen, John	Parsons, Ernie
Boyer, Claudette	Gravelle, Michael	Patten, Richard
Bradley, James J.	Hampton, Howard	Peters, Steve
Bryant, Michael	Hoy, Pat	Phillips, Gerry
Caplan, David	Kennedy, Gerard	Prue, Michael
Churley, Marilyn	Kormos, Peter	Pupatello, Sandra
Cleary, John C.	Kwinter, Monte	Ramsay, David
Colle, Mike	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Sergio, Mario
Cordiano, Joseph	Marchese, Rosario	Smitherman, George
Crozier, Bruce	Martel, Shelley	Sorbara, Greg
Curling, Alvin	Martin, Tony	
Di Cocco, Caroline	McGuinty, Dalton	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 54; the nays are 40.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

It being well past 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow afternoon.

The House adjourned at 1835.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Bramalea-Gore-Malton- Springdale	Gill, Raminder (PC)	Hamilton Mountain	Bountrogianni, Marie (L)
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Durham	O'Toole, John R. (PC)	London West / -Ouest	Wood, Bob (PC)
Eglinton-Lawrence	Colle, Mike (L)	London-Fanshawe	Mazzilli, Frank (PC)
Elgin-Middlesex-London	Peters, Steve (L)	Markham	Tsubouchi, Hon / L'hon David H. (PC) Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Culture / président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement, ministre de la Culture
Erie-Lincoln	Hudak, Hon / L'hon Tim (PC) Minister of Consumer and Business Services / ministre des Services aux consommateurs et aux entreprises	Mississauga Centre / -Centre	Sampson, Rob (PC)
Essex	Crozier, Bruce (L)		
Etobicoke Centre / -Centre	Stockwell, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC) Minister of the Environment, government House leader / ministre de l'Environnement, leader parlementaire du gouvernement		
Etobicoke North / -Nord	Hastings, John (PC)		
Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Kells, Morley (PC)		
Glengarry-Prescott-Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)		
Guelph-Wellington	Elliott, Hon / L'hon Brenda (PC) Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services / ministre des Services à la collectivité, à la famille et à l'enfance		

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Mississauga East / -Est	DeFaria, Hon / L'hon Carl (PC) Minister of Citizenship, minister responsible for seniors / ministre des Affaires civiques, ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées	Scarborough Centre / -Centre	Mushinski, Marilyn (PC)
Mississauga South / -Sud	Marland, Margaret (PC)	Scarborough East / -Est	Gilchrist, Steve (PC)
Nepean-Carleton	Baird, Hon / L'hon John R. (PC) Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs, deputy House leader / ministre de l'Énergie, ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones, leader parlementaire adjoint	Scarborough Southwest / -Sud-Ouest	Newman, Hon / L'hon Dan (PC) Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / ministre associé de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Niagara Centre / -Centre	Kormos, Peter (ND)	Scarborough-Agincourt	Phillips, Gerry (L)
Niagara Falls	Maves, Bart (PC)	Scarborough-Rouge River	Curling, Alvin (L)
Nickel Belt	Martel, Shelley (ND)	Simcoe North / -Nord	Dunlop, Garfield (PC)
Nipissing	McDonald, AL (PC)	Simcoe-Grey	Wilson, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Northumberland	Galt, Hon / L'hon Doug (PC) Minister without Portfolio, chief government whip / ministre sans portefeuille, whip en chef du gouvernement	St Catharines	Bradley, James J. (L)
Oak Ridges	Klees, Hon / L'hon Frank (PC) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports	St Paul's	Bryant, Michael (L)
Oakville	Carr, Hon / L'hon Gary (PC) Speaker / Président	Stoney Creek	Clark, Hon / L'hon Brad (PC) Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail
Oshawa	Ouellette, Hon / L'hon Jerry J. (PC) Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles	Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh	Cleary, John C. (L)
Ottawa Centre / -Centre	Patten, Richard (L)	Sudbury	Bartolucci, Rick (L)
Ottawa-Orléans	Coburn, Hon / L'hon Brian (PC) Minister of Tourism and Recreation / ministre du Tourisme et des Loisirs	Thornhill	Molinari, Hon / L'hon Tina R. (PC) Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre associée des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Ottawa South / -Sud	McGuinty, Dalton (L) Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition	Thunder Bay-Atikokan	McLeod, Lyn (L)
Ottawa West-Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest-Nepean	Guzzo, Garry J. (PC)	Thunder Bay-Superior North / -Nord	Gravelle, Michael (L)
Ottawa-Vanier	Boyer, Claudette (Ind)	Timiskaming-Cochrane	Ramsay, David (L)
Oxford	Hardeman, Hon / L'hon Ernie (PC) Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre associé des Affaires municipales et du Logement	Timmins-James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	Bisson, Gilles (ND)
Parkdale-High Park	Kennedy, Gerard (L)	Timmins-Baie James	Smitherman, George (L)
Parry Sound-Muskoka	Miller, Norm (PC)	Toronto Centre-Rosedale / Toronto-Centre-Rosedale	Churley, Marilyn (ND)
Perth-Middlesex	Johnson, Bert (PC)	Toronto-Danforth	Marchese, Rosario (ND)
Peterborough	Stewart, R. Gary (PC)	Trinity-Spadina	Sorbara, Greg (L)
Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge	Ecker, Hon / L'hon Janet (PC) Minister of Finance / ministre des Finances	Vaughan-King-Aurora	Arnott, Ted (PC)
Prince Edward-Hastings	Parsons, Ernie (L)	Waterloo-Wellington	Flaherty, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation / ministre de l'Entreprise, des Débouchés et de l'Innovation
Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	Conway, Sean G. (L)	Whitby-Ajax	Young, Hon / L'hon David (PC) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Sarnia-Lambton	Di Cocco, Caroline (L)	Willowdale	Pupatello, Sandra (L)
Sault Ste Marie	Martin, Tony (ND)	Windsor West / -Ouest	Duncan, Dwight (L)
		Windsor-St Clair	Kwinter, Monte (L)
		York Centre / -Centre	Munro, Julia (PC)
		York North / -Nord	Cordiano, Joseph (L)
		York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston	Sergio, Mario (L)
		York West / -Ouest	Vacant
		Mississauga West / -Ouest	

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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McMeekin, Bill Murdoch, Wayne Wettlaufer
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Fourth Session, 37th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Quatrième session, 37^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Wednesday 4 June 2003

Mercredi 4 juin 2003

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 4 June 2003

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 4 juin 2003

The House met at 1330.

Prayers.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ONTARIO DISABILITY SUPPORT PROGRAM

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): My statement is to all the members on the government side. It is now 11 years since people on ODSP have had an increase. The maximum they receive is \$930 a month, or \$11,160 a year. It is not possible to live in Ontario on \$11,160 a year. The government has promised a tax credit for people making \$11,000 a year. A tax credit is not a help. The government has made a big promise to increase ODSP payments, but the budget speaks for itself when it includes no items whatsoever to fund that increase.

People on ODSP are not numbers; they're not clients; they are people. They have dreams, they have hopes and they have needs, as each and every one of us do. Accommodation is not a privilege; it is a right. In our province it is unbelievable that people cannot afford a place to live. Food is not a privilege. Surely in Ontario food is not a privilege. Food is a right.

I would challenge any government member to live for one month on \$930—no credit cards, no having dinner with other people. Find accommodation and food and clothing on \$930 a month. I believe it is not possible.

I am imploring government members, do not use recipients of ODSP for election purposes. Do not misuse them. Do the right thing: fund an increase now.

JUNO BEACH CENTRE

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): I am happy to speak today to the efforts of groups and individuals in my riding who, in their own way, are helping Canadians remember the valiant efforts of our combatants in the Second World War.

I would like to mention the student council at Cayuga Secondary School, the Who-Did-It Club of Simcoe, and the Royal Canadian Legion branches in Port Dover, Selkirk, Scotland and Simcoe that have all, through hard work, raised funds for the Juno Beach Centre.

I'd especially like to point out the 2853 Simcoe Legion Army Cadet Corps. They fundraised \$7,000. I

attended their 34th annual review this Sunday, under their commanding officer, Captain Dan O'Neil. As a former member of the militia, we're very proud of our cadet corps.

During the door-knocking to raise money, the cadets heard stories from many people who were directly affected by the war.

As we speak, hundreds of Canadian veterans who landed on that beach 59 years ago, and their families, are returning to remember this historic event.

The Juno Beach Centre will open its doors to the public this Friday, June 6, coinciding with the 59th anniversary of the D-Day landings on the beaches of Normandy. Our Premier, Ernie Eves, will be present. Our contribution as a province is \$1 million, and an additional \$1.5 million is going toward the creation of a Queen's Park memorial to the warriors who fought in that terrible conflict.

TRANSIT SERVICES

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): On March 27 this year, the federal Minister of Transport, David Collenette, announced that the federal government was investing \$435 million to improve GO Transit's rail network in the extended greater Toronto area. This significant commitment by the federal government, combined with the persistent efforts of GTA municipalities to properly fund public transit, forms two thirds of a partnership that would ensure the maintenance and expansion of public transit services throughout Ontario.

Since 1998, the Harris-Eves Conservatives have done nothing but run away from their obligation to fund and expand public transportation in the province of Ontario. Even after unrelenting criticism for ending provincial funding for public transit, your government has only restored a small portion of what has been historically allocated to local governments.

In consistently starving municipalities throughout this province of public transit dollars, this government has shown that they have no interest, even when given incentives from the federal government, to participate as a full partner in the area of public transportation.

Now that hundreds of millions in additional federal funds have been dedicated to public transit in Ontario, your government must take major steps to improve rail transit for Niagara residents. The benefit to Niagara's economy, environment and overall quality of life would

compel any reasonably minded government to act on this important initiative.

The citizens of St Catharines and Niagara demand that the provincial government make increased access to rail transit a top priority; provide commuters and others with an alternative to the crammed, increasingly expensive and often unsafe highways; and make it easier for greater Toronto area tourists to come to Niagara.

MINIMUM WAGE

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Ontario's lowest-paid workers need a raise. The NDP raised the minimum wage four times, from \$5.40 to \$6.85, but for over eight years the minimum wage has been frozen at \$6.85 an hour. Since that time, inflation and the cost of living have eaten away at the minimum wage. Ontario's lowest-paid workers have seen a pay cut of almost 20% as a result, and that's nowhere near close to a survival income.

A person working full-time on minimum wage makes much less than even \$15,000 a year, and that's below the poverty line for most people in Ontario. One quarter of all workers are paid less than \$10; most, 61%, are women; 37% of single mothers in the labour force have a wage below 10 bucks an hour. These people need a raise. They need a raise to get by, to survive and to boost spending in the local economy.

The government's double standard on this issue is appalling. The Conservatives, joined by Dalton McGuinty and the Liberal caucus, voted themselves a 28% pay increase. Ontario's minimum wage workers need a pay increase far more than Ontario's MPPs.

The NDP has a public power plan that would give these workers the raise they sorely need and deserve. Public power means every man and woman should have the right to a fair and livable wage. Howard Hampton and the NDP would immediately increase the minimum wage to 8 bucks an hour and thaw the eight-year freeze on the wages of the lowest paid. Public power means it's unfair for MPPs to raise their own salary by over 25% when the lowest-paid workers haven't received a cent's raise in over eight years.

1340

HEALTH CARE WORKERS IN PARRY SOUND

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): Over the past few months, health care services in our province have faced a serious test. In my mind, we have shown our ability to respond, thanks to the people working to protect our health.

This is clearly the case in Parry Sound, as health care workers at the West Parry Sound Health Centre and the Muskoka-Parry Sound Health Unit have taken every precaution to ensure that the community's safety is first and foremost. I have spoken to many of these people, and I can assure you they are doing everything necessary and

according to protocol. These people are going above and beyond the call of duty, and I know they will continue to do so.

I would like to express my deepest appreciation to the health care workers at the West Parry Sound Health Centre and the Muskoka-Parry Sound Health Unit. This weekend I was in contact with many of these people as they worked straight through the weekend to protect our public health. Dr Salwa Bishay, Muskoka-Parry Sound director of chronic disease and injury prevention, Mr Peter Jelk, director of infectious diseases, John Boyd, chair of the Muskoka-Parry Sound board of health, Dr William Hemens, acting medical officer of health, and Norm Maciver, CEO of the West Parry Sound Health Centre, are providing strong and effective leadership on this issue. Their hard work, along with that of their colleagues, the doctors, nurses and health care providers, makes me confident that we will be able to keep our public health secure and prevent SARS from spreading into our communities.

I know that you will all join me in recognizing each of these dedicated workers and thanking them for their commitment and tireless work.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain): Ontario Liberals recognize that Ontario families are being charged outrageous auto insurance rates. Constituents of all ages have been coming to me with incredible insurance stories and concerns. I'll share just one of them today.

Linda and Rick have been driving for 31 years with clear driving records. Their son Scott has been driving for less than five years. The family was paying \$1,400 per year for insurance. It has now been increased to \$4,525. Why? Because after 31 years, the family had a first accident. Their son had a minor at-fault accident in a parking lot. The mother, Linda, had a moderate at-fault accident at an intersection. Their insurance was cancelled. Remember: two drivers, 31 years, clean record.

The first-act forgiveness policy cannot be applied to the son because he is considered a new driver, and the forgiveness policy cannot be transferred to his mother. It's a Catch-22. Because of this, other insurance companies will not take them. The result is an increase of three times more than the original rate. Here is how fairness works in Ontario: in spite of the fact that Rick, the father, was not involved in either accident, his rates were increased because it was his vehicle that was involved, making him high-risk.

The law requires that all drivers in Ontario be insured, yet the government has done nothing to protect Ontario families from escalating insurance rates, unfair practices and a market that doesn't appear very competitive. On behalf of my constituents on Hamilton Mountain, I join my colleague from Toronto Centre-Rosedale in demanding that this government protect Ontario consumers. Stop catering to your corporate friends and put Ontario

families first. All that people are asking is to have access to fair and stable insurance rates.

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): Am I ever glad the member for St Catharines is here, because I wanted to tell him about the representation that the highways are benefiting in other areas of the province.

I rise today to tell all of us about the announcement that I had the honour of making in the great riding of Perth-Middlesex. On Friday, May 23, I, on behalf of the honourable Frank Klees, our hard-working, efficient, effective Minister of Transportation, announced three highway improvement projects in and around my riding. These three projects, worth a combined total of \$8.8 million, will improve Highway 23 in North Perth and South Huron and Highway 8 in West Perth. This money is being invested in restoring and replacing bridges, resurfacing sections of the highway, and adding a left-hand turn lane at the Campbell Soup factory in my hometown of North Perth. With more than 600 people employed at the Campbell Soup factory and trucks coming and going, this left-hand turn lane will improve this section of the highway on the south edge of Listowel immensely.

This investment is part of our government's five-year, \$20-billion SuperBuild initiative, designed to facilitate the largest infrastructure building program in Ontario's history. These projects are good news for the people and businesses of Perth-Middlesex. They'll make our highways safer and smoother for residents, tourists, truckers and farmers. Keeping our highways and bridges in good repair is an investment in our future. Safe, reliable highways are important to the quality of life and prosperity enjoyed by the constituents of Perth-Middlesex.

NORTHERN ONTARIO MEDICAL SCHOOL

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): Today the people of northwestern and northeastern Ontario received bad news. Our northern Ontario medical school is delayed by another year.

The concern that we have in Sudbury and northern Ontario is whether this is another Sudbury Regional Hospital. Is this the same type of project that you people managed in Sudbury, with its regenerated hospital? Listen: the communities of Thunder Bay and Sudbury together have over 80,000 people who do not have doctors. We were relying on you, the government, to ensure that problem was dealt with. You spun this to the people of northeastern and northwestern Ontario. In fact, you told the people that it would be up and running 12 different times, that the starting day would be 2004. What do we find out today? It's 2005, with no guarantees.

Well, let me tell you, I have a message from the people of Thunder Bay, Sudbury and northwestern and northeastern Ontario: we want that medical school. We want it now. We want answers. We want to know what

happened to the plan you had. What happened to the money you invested? The fact is, had you invested the money when you should have, not two years after the announcement, today we would be talking about the 2004 opening. Instead, our communities of northeastern and northwestern Ontario continue to get bad news when it comes to health care from the Harris-Eves Tories—not good enough.

BURLINGTON SOUND OF MUSIC FESTIVAL

Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington): I'm pleased to rise today to acknowledge the efforts of the community of Burlington as we prepare for the weekend of June 12 to 15, for our annual Sound of Music Festival. This next year marks our 25th anniversary. This is an outstanding festival. It's home for the Burlington Teen Tour Band, one of the most famous youth marching bands anywhere in North America, and also for the Top Hat Marching Band, another group that performs.

This year's headliners include David Wilcox. I'm pleased to report to the House that Ronnie Hawkins's health has improved. He's going to be our headliner on Saturday night. Natalie MacMaster and Rik Emmett are among some of the great talent that's going to be there. Saturday will be the annual parade. There's karaoke, big band competitions—there's something for everyone of all ages.

I encourage everyone in the province to put aside some time that weekend to come to Burlington, Ontario, to experience one of the best festivals that we have in the province.

Hon Brad Clark (Minister of Labour): Are you going to sing karaoke?

Mr Jackson: I'm not going to sing karaoke this year.

I do want to thank the Ministry of Tourism and Recreation for its annual contribution of \$15,000 from the tourism event marketing program. We will be marketing in Buffalo, in the United States and in Quebec to reach as many tourists to come to Burlington and Ontario for the Sound of Music Festival.

VISITORS

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'm sure that members of the Legislature will want to welcome a couple of fathers who are here to see their sons who are pages. First of all we have Mr Santino Nucci, from Thunder Bay, father of Mario Nucci. Thank you very much; it's good to see you. We also have Ken Seguin, from Windsor West, whose son Nicolas is a page. They're doing a great job.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): We welcome our families here today.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the report on intended appointments dated June 4, 2003, of the standing committee on government agencies. Pursuant to standing order 106(e), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on regulations and private bills and move its adoption.

Clerk at the Table (Mr Todd Decker): Mr Hoy from the standing committee on regulations and private bills presents the committee's report as follows, and moves its adoption:

Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill Pr23, An Act respecting the Kitchener and Waterloo Community Foundation.

Your committee begs to report the following bills without amendment:

Bill Pr12, An Act respecting the Municipality of Chatham-Kent;

Bill Pr20, An Act respecting the Thunder Bay Foundation.

Your committee further recommends that the fees and the actual costs of printing at all stages be remitted on Bill Pr20, An Act respecting the Thunder Bay Foundation, and Bill Pr23, An Act respecting the Kitchener and Waterloo Community Foundation.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

KIDS FIRST LICENCES ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 SUR LES PLAQUES D'IMMATRICULATION EN FAVEUR DES ENFANTS

Mr Duncan moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 79, An Act to support children's charities in Ontario / Projet de loi 79, Loi visant à aider les œuvres de bienfaisance pour enfants en Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

1350

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): This bill proposes an optional program allowing persons to make donations to support the work of children's charities in Ontario when paying fees for licences, permits and number plates issued under the Highway Traffic Act. Donors may request specially designed number plates in recognition of their donations.

This is a program done in a number of American jurisdictions which has raised literally hundreds of millions of dollars in a voluntary way for children's charities in those states.

ARCHIVES

AWARENESS WEEK ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 SUR LA SEMAINE DE SENSIBILISATION AUX ARCHIVES

Mr Johnson moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 80, An Act to proclaim Archives Awareness Week / Projet de loi 80, Loi proclamant la Semaine de sensibilisation aux archives.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): Ontario has a rich and colourful recorded history. Archives play an essential role in the preservation and use of this history. This bill proclaims that the week beginning on the first Monday in April of each year is Archives Awareness Week.

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT (HELMETS), 2003

LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT LE CODE DE LA ROUTE (CASQUES)

Mr Levac moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 81, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act / Projet de loi 81, Loi modifiant le Code de la route.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried?

The member for a short statement?

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): This is a reintroduction from the last sitting. The bill amends the Highway Traffic Act to make it an offence for any person to use a skateboard, scooter, inline skates or roller skates on a highway without wearing an appropriate helmet. Parents and guardians of a person under the age of 16 are also guilty of an offence if they authorize and knowingly permit the person to contravene this restriction. A police officer may require a person to provide identification if the police officer finds the person contravening this restriction.

The authority to make regulations to exempt persons from the requirement to wear helmets is repealed.

Medical officials tell me that 50% of all related head injuries could and would be eliminated if this amendment were adopted.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
AMENDMENT ACT
(PRE-TREATMENT OF
HAZARDOUS WASTE), 2003

LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LA PROTECTION
DE L'ENVIRONNEMENT
(PRÉTRAITEMENT DES DÉCHETS
DANGEREUX)

Ms Di Cocco moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 82, An Act to amend the Environmental Protection Act to require the pre-treatment of hazardous waste before it is used as landfill / Projet de loi 82, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la protection de l'environnement pour exiger le prétraitement des déchets dangereux avant leur dépôt dans une décharge.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): This bill will change the fact that Ontario is the only jurisdiction on the continent of North America that doesn't require the pre-treatment of hazardous waste before disposal. This bill amends the Environmental Protection Act by requiring the pre-treatment of hazardous waste before it is disposed of in a landfill.

SARS INQUIRY ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 PRÉVOYANT
UNE ENQUÊTE SUR LE SRAS

Mr Hampton moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 83, An Act to provide for a public inquiry to examine the outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome in the Province of Ontario / Projet de loi 83, Loi prévoyant une enquête publique pour examiner la poussée du syndrome respiratoire aigu sévère dans la province de l'Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): The bill requires the Premier to recommend to the Lieutenant Governor in Council that a commission be appointed to inquire into and report on the outbreak of SARS and to make recommendations directed to the avoidance of similar diseases in similar circumstances. The commission is given powers under the Public Inquiries Act. Once the inquiry begins, the commission must make an interim report in six months and a final report in 12 months.

INSURANCE AMENDMENT ACT
(ELECTION CANCELLATION
INSURANCE), 2003

LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES
ASSURANCES (ASSURANCE-
ANNULATION DES ÉLECTIONS)

Mr Parsons moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 84, An Act to amend the Insurance Act to allow for the sale of election cancellation insurance / Projet de loi 84, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les assurances pour permettre l'offre d'une assurance-annulation des élections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1357 to 1402.

The Speaker: All those in favour will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Agostino, Dominic	Duncan, Dwight	Newman, Dan
Bartolucci, Rick	Gerretsen, John	O'Toole, John
Bountrogianni, Marie	Gravelle, Michael	Parsons, Ernie
Bradley, James J.	Hardeman, Ernie	Patten, Richard
Bryant, Michael	Hoy, Pat	Peters, Steve
Caplan, David	Hudak, Tim	Phillips, Gerry
Churley, Marilyn	Kormos, Peter	Prue, Michael
Clement, Tony	Kwinter, Monte	Pupatello, Sandra
Cordiano, Joseph	Levac, David	Ramsay, David
Crozier, Bruce	Martel, Shelley	Ruprecht, Tony
Curling, Alvin	Martin, Tony	Sergio, Mario
Di Cocco, Caroline	McGuinty, Dalton	Smitherman, George
Dombrowsky, Leona	McMeekin, Ted	Stockwell, Chris

The Speaker: Those opposed?

Nays

Johnson, Bert	Stewart, R. Gary	Wood, Bob
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Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 39; the nays are 3.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

The member for a short statement?

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): In recognition of large expenditures by Elections Ontario over the last four months, this bill amends the Insurance Act by authorizing the sale of election cancellation insurance. The Chief Election Officer and individual candidates are permitted to purchase the insurance. The section that authorizes the sale of election cancellation insurance ceases to have effect if a system for fixed-term elections is implemented.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
AMENDMENT ACT
(INDUSTRIAL FACILITIES), 2003
LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LA PROTECTION
DE L'ENVIRONNEMENT
(INSTALLATIONS INDUSTRIELLES)

Mr Levac moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 85, An Act to amend the Environmental Protection Act to regulate industrial facilities that use, store or treat hazardous materials / Projet de loi 85, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la protection de l'environnement pour réglementer les installations industrielles où sont utilisés, entreposés ou traités des matériaux dangereux.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for short statement?

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): This is the reintroduction of a bill submitted last session. The bill amends the Environmental Protection Act by requiring that industrial facilities that regularly use, store or treat significant amounts of hazardous materials prepare and submit an environmental report on their property every five years. The report will be available to the public. A facility that is ceasing operations is required to submit a final environmental report. Owners of the industrial facilities are responsible for any environmental damage that occurs on their land while it is under their care. I believe this will end any brownfields in the future.

MOTIONS

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs): I would like to ask for unanimous consent to move a motion with respect to the standing committee on estimates.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it agreed? Agreed.

Hon Mr Baird: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 59(e), the standing committee on estimates may sit this afternoon at its regularly scheduled time.

I know the Minister of Education would like to second that.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

ORAL QUESTIONS

PROTECTION FOR HEALTH CARE WORKERS

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My first question today is for the Minister of Health. Yesterday, I met with a group of nurses from North York

General Hospital, and they shared with me their very real concerns. They told me of one thing in particular that they are very, very worried and at the same time angry about; that is, the masks they are wearing are not adequate. One nurse told me she has gone 11 weeks wearing a mask that was never properly fitted. They also shared with me that there are now 25 nurses hospitalized at the North York General Hospital alone as a result of working with patients suffering from SARS. One of those nurses is now in critical condition.

The nurses expressed to me that they are exhausted and frightened for themselves and their families, and they're asking for a guarantee of basic protection.

Minister, you will recall that on May 2, I believe, you issued a directive that nurses be fitted with appropriate masks and that they wear those masks in SARS units, critical care units and emergency rooms. Why is it that over one month later we still have nurses working in SARS environments in Ontario hospitals who are not equipped with appropriate masks that are fitted for them?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I thank the honourable member for giving me his take on issues. I too have been meeting with nurses, basically on a daily basis over the past few days, as well as with other hospital officials and medical practitioners. I want to assure him, and through him this House, that the absolute safety of our health workers, as well as our patients of course, is our top priority when dealing with the second SARS outbreak.

I too have heard those concerns. I can tell you that we have been learning a lot over the last 11 weeks when it comes to the protection of our health workers and what types of masking, gowning and gloving procedures are best. We continue to learn and we continue to, I believe, have the best kind of directives and protocols found anywhere in the world. So that process will continue.

1410

Mr McGuinty: Sir, it's one thing to have directives in place and it's quite another to ensure that they are being followed. You issued that directive back on May 2. Nurses told you and me yesterday that, in many cases, they're not equipped with properly fitted masks.

This seems to be, Minister, another important reason why we should be holding a full, independent public inquiry. When I talk about a full, independent public inquiry, I'm talking about one that provides our nurses and other health care workers with whistle-blower protection. I think it is essential to ensure that they can come forward without any sense of reservation whatsoever. I think we have to have authority to the commissioner to compel witnesses and to subpoena documents where he or she believes that is necessary.

I think that is the best thing we can do out of honour to those nurses and those SARS patients and those families who have lost loved ones. I think the most responsible thing we can do in the face of this very real challenge is to hold a full, independent public inquiry. Why is it, Minister, that you continue to refuse to proceed with that kind of an inquiry?

Hon Mr Clement: First of all, on the issue of masking, let me assure the honourable member in this House that in fact it is Ontario that sets the standards for masking, and we certainly expect compliance. There have been cases of improper mask use. We have not thus far been able to connect any of those cases to a case of SARS, from a scientific point of view. There are other issues that come into play where SARS is in a hospital setting. But so far, what I am told by public health officials, by the commissioner of public safety and, indeed, by all of our medical experts is that there hasn't been a case of improper mask fitting being the cause of an illness. Nonetheless, it is important to have proper mask fitting.

I can tell you that when it comes to whistle-blower protection, there is an obligation under the act, because this is a reportable disease, to protect our health care workers when they serve the obligation to report a case of SARS. We will protect them. We will protect them under the Occupational Health and Safety Act and we will protect them because they are doing their job by reporting any case of SARS or suspected SARS. Certainly, that is our commitment, and that is the Premier's commitment as well.

Mr McGuinty: I say to the minister again that there are nurses today working in Ontario hospitals who are not being adequately protected because they don't have the right masks. They told me about that yesterday. I can give you their names and numbers and you can speak with them directly, Minister.

I want to come back to the issue of the public inquiry. I think we owe that to those nurses, I think we owe it to Ontarians who are suffering at present from SARS and I think we owe it to the families who have lost loved ones. I'm talking about a full, independent public inquiry, complete with whistle-blower protection and the power to compel witnesses.

I'll tell you why I think that our approach is more responsible than the one that you're advocating: because this approach, an independent public inquiry, takes it out of my hands, takes it out of your hands, and turns it over to an independent commissioner who conducts a comprehensive, thorough investigation into what went wrong, what happened and lays out for all of us a responsible, intelligent road map to ensure that this kind of thing doesn't happen to us in the future. I think that is the best thing we can do for Ontarians. I think it's the most responsible thing we can do for Ontarians. I ask you, Minister, why won't you agree to a full, independent public inquiry?

Hon Mr Clement: I want to assure the honourable member and, through him, this House, that we fully intend to get to the answers that all of us seek. Every health care worker seeks these answers, every public health official seeks these answers and I, as Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, want the answers to these questions as well. So I want to assure the member, in case he has not heard me recently, that we do want an independent investigation; we do want an inquiry that

will be completely public on this issue. So I want to assure the member that that is the intention of this government.

The honourable member says that he came across some certain information yesterday about this. It's a good thing that I also spoke to those very same nurses because otherwise I would wonder whether he was treating this as a reportable disease or not, because this is a serious matter. If the honourable member has issues he wishes to raise, please raise them—if not with me, then with Dr Young or Dr D'Cunha—so we can help protect the people of Ontario rather than scoring partisan political points in the Ontario Legislature.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition):

My question is to the Chair of Management Board. Minister, your party's biggest fundraiser lent your party's biggest donor millions of Ontario pension fund dollars, and he did so in an extraordinarily unusual investment—extraordinary not only for the Ontario pension fund but very extraordinary for the pension fund industry as a whole. In fact, the Ontario pension fund has never done another deal like this, either before or since.

Yesterday, Mr Weiss confirmed that he likely spoke to Mr Cortellucci about this kind of deal while he was still acting as your party's fundraiser. This is from the National Post, "Don Weiss said he discussed business opportunities with Mr Cortellucci at fundraisers."

This is from the Toronto Sun, "When you look back over the years, I would talk about real estate ideas ... I must have had those conversations with him on those subjects."

Minister, are you still saying today that there is no conflict of interest here whatsoever when your biggest fundraiser makes this kind of extraordinary deal with your biggest donor?

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Culture): You'll forgive me if I don't take your interpretation of the facts, the same way as I didn't with your colleague who is sitting next to you. What I have to say to the Leader of the Opposition is quite clearly what I said yesterday in his absence, and on Monday as well. I refer him to yesterday's Hansard, June 3, on page 827. I will say exactly the same thing. What's at issue here is not who's involved with these transactions but whether or not due process and due diligence were taken, and I believe they have been.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Supplementary?

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Come to order, please. Sorry for the interruption.

Mr McGuinty: I take from that, Minister, that you don't believe there's any kind of a conflict of interest here. What I'm going to do, then, is provide you with more information today, in the hopes that this will lend some clarity to your vision on the matter of this conflict.

We reviewed Mr Weiss's appointment and his statements to the government agencies committee. The facts are shocking. The facts are that Mr Weiss continued to work at the PC Ontario fund for at least nine months while sitting as a member on the pension board. He did not sever his relations with the party fund, in fact, until a month after his confirmation as chair. For nine months, Mr Weiss was raising money for your party from donors like Mr Cortellucci, while he sat on the board of the Ontario pension fund, involved in making decisions about how to invest pension money.

I ask you again, Minister: how can you possibly say that there is no conflict of interest here of any kind whatsoever?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: Once again, I've dealt with this question yesterday and the day before—

Interjections.

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: Well, you'll forgive me if I don't take what you're saying as the facts. Facts are facts; what you believe is probably something totally different.

There's no overlap with respect to Mr Weiss. Mr Weiss appeared twice before the committee dealing with these appointments, and clearly twice he passed.

I don't believe there's a conflict. We've asked, in fact, my deputy minister to report back to me; she has. We certainly asked whether or not there's any conflict. There's indication that there is not, and I'll take the word of my deputy minister over the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr McGuinty: When a review of seven multi-million dollar land deals takes just a couple of hours, it isn't a review; it's a whitewash. That's the difference.

Let's take it from the top again, Minister. Here are the facts. If you dispute these facts, then please tell me. Number one: your party's biggest fundraiser lends your party's biggest donor millions in pension fund dollars.

1420

Number two: the deal is very unusual and extraordinary, not only for the industry as a whole but for the Ontario pension fund in particular. This kind of a deal has never happened before or since. Thirdly, for nine months Mr Weiss was working both as a fundraiser for the party and as a member of the board of the Ontario pension fund.

I say to you, Minister, that those facts are beyond dispute. I'm asking you again, how is it that you can possibly say in the face of those facts that there is no conflict of interest of any kind, none whatsoever, to be found here?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: Let me deal with real facts. In 1991, the policy was brought in which allowed investment in mortgages. One of the reasons was that they wanted to have a balanced portfolio. This was reconfirmed again several years later.

The facts are these: according to Benefits Canada, in their review of the top 100 pension funds in Canada, 1.7% of total assets are invested in mortgages. In this particular case, this results in 0.3% of the total assets. So it's not a huge investment when we look at the entire portfolio of \$11.5 billion.

What we are concerned with on this side is whether or not due process and due diligence were followed. We're satisfied they were.

The Leader of the Opposition is making all kinds of allegations. I suggest to him that he check his facts, and if he's certain of his facts he should repeat those facts outside the House.

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Energy. Minister, yesterday you were forced to admit that your scheme of emergency temporary electricity generation will cost at least \$100 million. That's \$250,000 per megawatt just to install these temporary generators. On May 6 you told this Legislature that if these generators had been available last summer, they would have run for only 14 minutes. Taking your figures, Minister, if that happens this summer, the cost of using your temporary generators for 14 minutes would be \$7 million a minute for power.

Minister, is \$7 million a minute for privatized, deregulated electricity your idea of a good deal for Ontario consumers?

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs): If the member opposite had checked the facts, he would discover that when I suggested to use the term of 14 minutes, that was in relation to diesel-powered generators.

Mr Hampton: Minister, you're the one that's telling us that these natural gas generators will be a substitution for diesel. You're the one who was telling us they would be used infrequently. I note this \$100-million cost is just to install and set them up. It doesn't include standby charges, natural gas charges or the eventual production cost. But we know that this will happen on a very hot summer day when there's not enough electricity, when your deregulated market sees the price spike up to, oh, 50 cents or 60 cents a kilowatt hour. Then these generators will come on, so we'll be paying a very high premium indeed.

Minister, if you insist that this is cheaper power, will you disclose the contracts so that the people of Ontario will see just how much you really are going to charge them for this latest episode of privatized, deregulated electricity?

Hon Mr Baird: The member opposite says a number of things which are not factual, so I'll correct them. I'll repeat that the 14 minutes I referred to last summer was for diesel generators that would only have been used in the case of an emergency. The natural gas generators have a dual benefit: to reduce our reliance on expensive, imported power and to provide a standby capacity. So he's wrong there.

When he said that \$100 million is just for the installation, he's wrong there. When he said that I said this would be cheaper power, he's wrong there. Wrong, wrong, wrong.

Mr Hampton: Minister, I have a copy of what you said on May 6. You said, "We are looking to the private

sector to ask what opportunities might be available. There could be opportunities with respect to large natural gas portable generation or from some small diesel-powered generation." Then you said that if we'd had this policy in place last year, it might have been required for 14 minutes.

You're the one who says it will cost \$100 million just to set it up. You're the one who says, "Oh, we might only need it for 14 minutes." Do the quick math and it works out to \$7 million a minute for hydroelectricity. Then there's the cost of natural gas, there's the standby charge, and we know from other boondoggles like this in the privatized, deregulated market that you pay a premium for the electricity. This is the people's money. This is what they will have to pay one way or another.

Will you disclose the contracts so that people across Ontario will see just how much—\$7 million a minute, \$7.5 million a minute—they're going to be paying for your latest episode of privatized, deregulated electricity?

Hon Mr Baird: The leader of the third party never lets the facts get in the way of a good argument. I clearly spoke of the 14 minutes being the case in emergency standby diesel capacity, not in the natural gas contracts that have been awarded. I never said they'd be cheaper and I never said anything the member opposite has described. He's wrong. There's a name for days like that for this member. They're called weekdays.

The policy we brought forward is a measure to both reduce our reliance on expensive imported power in emergency situations and provide stability of supply. I think it's important for the people of Ontario—whether you have a seniors' home, where you have frail and elderly adults; whether you have a hospital; whether you have enterprises in the province that depend on electricity—to take a reasonable precaution to ensure that we have adequacy of supply in a tight market.

Mr Hampton: Please take this to the Minister of Energy so he can read his own words.

PROTECTION FOR HEALTH CARE WORKERS

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): Minister of Health, today I was at a rally outside Scarborough General Hospital, with nurses and health care workers who are on the front line of the battle against SARS. They are overworked, overstressed and very scared and they say you have let them down. They say you've failed to protect their health and safety, just as you failed to protect the health and safety of patients. They say you need to stop telling them to hunker down. You need to start listening to them because they're the people out there who are actually putting their lives at risk. They're the people who are actually getting sick. They're the people, some of whom are dying. They don't need you giving them your dismissive answers that they should just hunker down.

They want to know one thing: are you going to call a public inquiry, give them whistle-blower protection, or

are you going to continue to talk about this backroom investigation? Public inquiry, whistle-blower protection: yes or no?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): In the past 30 hours I met with nurses: yesterday morning, yesterday afternoon and this morning, so I don't need any lectures from the honourable leader of the third party about keeping my schedule open to talk to the front-line heroes who are doing the job for the people of Ontario. I do listen to them.

I do know that this is a frustrating time. I do know that there are concerns about health and safety. I do know that we have to ensure that our hospitals are safe places for patients and health workers. I do know that our government is working with them and their representatives to ensure that is the case.

Mr Hampton: Minister, yes, you have met with some nurses. Some of the nurses came back from that meeting and talked to me and this is what they said: "Tell the Minister of Health to stop his tactic of trying to pit nurse against nurse or health care worker against health care worker." That's exactly what they said.

They said something else. They said that your government let its guard down against SARS too early. They say that they want real protection from SARS: masks that work and protective clothing that works. They want standardized screening and protocol procedures for all hospitals, something that's not in place now. They want a province-wide patient transfer tracking system so that we don't have another SARS patient being transferred without staff knowledge to another hospital.

That's why they want a public inquiry, so that all these issues can be squarely and fully before the public. Minister, do you support a public inquiry with whistle-blower protection for nurses and health care workers, yes or no?

Hon Mr Clement: The answer is yes, of course. We are going to have that kind of investigation into the facts and circumstances surrounding the outbreaks. I want to assure this House that is absolutely our intention because I want, the Premier wants, our government wants, answers to these questions as well. So I can tell you that that will occur, that there should be protections, that there are protections for nurses or other medical practitioners to ensure they can do their job. Their job is to report cases like this to the public health system. Of course they should and they will and they do have protection in that regard. The answer to the honourable member's questions is yes.

The honourable member speaks about ensuring that we're not pitting nurses against nurses, and health practitioners against health practitioners. I can tell you I do that every day of the week. When are you going to start doing it?

1430

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Ms Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): My question is for the Chair of Management Board. I'd like to return

to the matter of the deal between your largest fundraiser and your largest donor.

We learned today that your fundraiser was on the board while he was taking donations from Mario Cortellucci. We also learned today that Don Weiss is admitting that the decision to lend taxpayer-guaranteed pension money to your largest donor was done by an ad hoc committee. This sounds a lot like your government's famous sports team tax break walk-around by cabinet. An informal group headed by Don Weiss decides to invest in the deal. Only after the deal was signed did the investment committee of the board get a chance to review the decision. Don Weiss is on the investment committee too. They had no power to undo the deal, even if they chose to.

Given the unique nature of the deal, given that the pension board had never made investments of this nature, given the conflict of interest between your biggest fundraiser and your top donor, how can you say today that there would be proper oversight of such a decision?

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Culture): These accusations are extremely wild and incorrect. I suggest to the member that she check her facts. If she feels so sure of her facts, I suggest she repeat them outside the House. I'm satisfied we've had due diligence. I'm satisfied we've got no conflicts. I'm quite satisfied in terms of the process that has gone through. That's what we're concerned about here. If you have any of these wild accusations of conflict of interest, please make them outside the House and stand by them.

Ms Papatello: Minister, I think your biggest problem is that people are connecting the dots and it's becoming a straight line. I'm asking you a serious question about the behaviour of your government and what you consider to be good judgment. I expect a better kind of investigation than some kind of fly-by by a deputy minister over such a serious issue.

I am asking you again: the decision to lend your top donor tens of millions of dollars was made by an informal group at the pension board, headed by your biggest fundraiser. Decisions made in the hallways are rarely good policy decisions. We know the Ontario Pension Board never made this kind of deal before. We know other pension boards don't do deals like this. We know your biggest fundraiser and your top donor discussed deals like this while Don Weiss was still working for the PC Party. While still at the party, he had his foot in at the pension board.

We asked you yesterday about a conflict. I expect a reasonable investigation about how these dots are starting to connect. Why are you refusing to do this, and what are you afraid is going to come to light—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I'm afraid the member's time is up.

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: I am very pleased to hear the member correct herself inadvertently from her earlier statements this week. Earlier this week, she was accusing the loans of being in the nature of hundreds of millions of dollars. Now she's down to—

Ms Papatello: That deal is for over \$150 million. Don't you be bullying me, mister.

The Speaker: Member take a seat. Order. This is the last warning to the member for Windsor West, I'm afraid. She has asked the question; the minister now gets a chance to reply. If she yells out like that again, she'll be asked to leave. Sorry, Chair of Management Board.

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: As I said, today in her own words she's talking about tens of millions of dollars, so obviously she's self-correcting without actually correcting her own record.

Let's deal with the facts. Once again, as I just—and I'm constantly repeating myself. Someone said that if you repeat yourself about five or six times, even to dogs, you get through to them eventually. First of all, Benefits Canada reported in their top 100 pension funds that 1.7% of total assets is invested in mortgages. This is not an unusual practice, considering that the total portfolio of the pension board into mortgages—

Interjections.

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: Excuse me. Thank you. In this case, the pension board total mortgage investment is 0.3% of their assets, so it's less than the median, in fact. One of the things you need to do is make sure that the portfolio is diversified. These accusations are so wild, they're just afraid to say it outside the Legislature. Let them do so.

EDUCATION LABOUR DISPUTE

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): My question is for the Minister of Education. Last night, our government put students first when we voted in favour of ending the lockout in the Toronto Catholic District School Board. For nearly three weeks, the students have been unable to attend school because their board and union couldn't come to an agreement. Worse than that, when our government took decisive action to bring about an end to this labour disruption, the opposition played politics and continually stalled—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): This is the last warning for the member for Hamilton East as well. He'll be asked to leave if he continues. Sorry for the interruption, member for Scarborough Centre. I apologize.

Ms Mushinski: Can I start at the beginning?

The Speaker: Sorry, in the interests of time—I hate to do that. If you could try and get close. You'll have to wrap it up. You've got, I believe, about 20 seconds. I apologize for that. I hate to do it and I know it does throw you off, but we do need to keep on the time. I apologize.

Ms Mushinski: Thank you for that, Mr Speaker. Even last night, 40 opposition members voted against the bill, thus adding to their shameful record on education.

There has been much confusion and misinformation about the contents of our recently passed legislation on returning students to the classroom because of the opposition's fearmongering and rhetoric. Minister, what

has this government done to bring labour stability to classrooms all across Ontario?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Deputy Premier, Minister of Education): Our government, this past year and in prior years, now has in place a process that requires boards to negotiate three-year agreements with their teachers in order to ensure that we have stability within the educational system. We've also invested \$680 million this past year in order that boards and teachers can negotiate fair agreements.

We want to make sure that our students are in the classroom. We want to make sure there is stability in the classroom. We believe that this additional money, which is 3% to the salary benchmark on two occasions, would certainly help to bring stability to the classroom for our students.

Ms Mushinski: Thank you for that response, Minister. As I said before, the opposition and other pundits have done a lot of fearmongering and have taken every opportunity to say one thing and do another. Liberals especially tried to use Toronto's children as political pawns in this whole debate by tabling their own back-to-work legislation so that they could claim credit even while voting against the back-to-work legislation. What's worse, the Liberal leader double-dealt his own caucus by saying one thing in this House and then sending his caucus out to say something else.

Minister, for the record, could you please clarify the contents of this legislation? Does it make volunteer duties mandatory? Can you tell the people of Ontario what was in this bill passed last night that put students first?

1440

Hon Mrs Witmer: There was, unfortunately, an attempt by the opposition to try to confuse the public and the media about the contents of the legislation. But I can tell you that the bill did a couple of things: the bill put the students back into the classroom; the bill ended the lockout of the teachers at the TCDSB; and the bill ensured that students could return to class today to receive quality education.

The bill did not change the ability of the minister to change the duties of teachers. Since the 1950s, the Education Act has given the Minister of Education the ability to alter teachers' duties. There is nothing new in this bill in this regard. That's been there since 1950.

LAND DEVELOPMENT

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): I have a question to the Deputy Premier. I want to ask you again how your government can justify another high-risk land speculation deal by your number one and biggest donor, Mario Cortellucci, who gave your party \$1 million. How is it justifiable for Mr Cortellucci, your biggest donor, who bought this land in Uxbridge that was frozen by your government, that the town of Uxbridge declined to rezone and to which the regional council in Durham unanimously said no rezoning, to still have bought this

land? Now we find out that he is going to be compensated with public land in Seaton. How many acres of public land—6,000 acres in Seaton—are you going to give Mr Cortellucci for his high-risk speculation? How much does he deserve in Seaton?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Deputy Premier, Minister of Education): The Minister of Municipal Affairs would be very pleased to respond.

Hon David Young (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I am pleased to respond, actually. I'm pleased to try to set the record straight.

I am disappointed by what the Liberals are engaging in, which I would characterize as drive-by defamation. They seem to be pulling facts out of thin air and presenting them as reality.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order.

Sorry for the interruption, Minister.

Hon Mr Young: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

I'm not certain if this is one of the items that Mr McGuinty brought back from his media training in Chicago or Washington. What I am certain of is that we set out to protect 100% of the Oak Ridges moraine. We did so by bringing together environmentalists, municipal leaders and land developers and we reached a consensus that will protect all of the land in the Oak Ridges moraine, one of the most environmentally sensitive areas of—

The Speaker: I'm afraid the minister's time's up.

Mr Colle: I'd like first of all to correct the record for the new minister. You did not protect all of the moraine. In fact, another one of your favourite developers was allowed to build 7,000 homes on the most sensitive part of the moraine in Richmond Hill. For starters, you let him do that. Now you've got your biggest donor, who comes in at the last minute, and everybody says, "Incredible. This is a smart guy, with all his money. Why would this guy buy this land that you can't develop?" Then we find out why he bought this land that nobody could develop: because your government is now going to give him how many acres of public land in Seaton? How many acres are you going to give him for being the big donor that you love so much? How many acres does he deserve?

Hon Mr Young: I'm not particularly impressed by the puppy-dog tears the member opposite sheds. I remember him standing up and saying, "Let's get together and protect the moraine," as we were in the process of doing that. We have done just that.

Because we have anticipated a hypocritical approach to this by members opposite and others, we brought in independent, impartial people to ensure that this process was one that was beyond approach. We brought in people like David Crombie, who oversaw the process in the early stages. We brought in Justice Houlden to oversee the fairness of this process. As you know, he is a retired, very well respected senior justice of the Supreme Court of Ontario, as it then was. He was brought in, and his mandate continues. He is there to make sure that what

happens is in the interests of the people of Ontario. He continues to be there to serve that purpose so that individuals like you do not use a forum like this to act in an irresponsible way.

ENERGY CONSERVATION INITIATIVES

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): My question is for the Minister of Energy. In the recent speech from the throne, the government made several commitments that will help ensure that Ontarians have a supply of power today, tomorrow and into the future. One of those commitments was to conservation measures and cleaner sources of power. We know from our consultations with the people of this province that this is indeed important to them. Can you please tell the people of Ontario what you are doing to follow up on these important throne speech commitments?

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs): We've taken a number of initiatives, particularly with respect to demand-side management and our 45,000 people who have been able to convert to energy-efficient appliances.

I did want to respond to the leader of the third party, who passed over Hansard to me. Earlier today, the leader of the third party said, "On May 6 you told this Legislature that if these generators had been available last summer, they would have run for only 14 minutes." The Hansard that he sent over said, "large natural gas portable generation or from some small diesel-powered generation." I would suspect the latter, meaning diesel-powered generation for 14 minutes. I suspect the leader of the third party will want to get up and apologize for misleading the House.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I'm going to ask the minister to withdraw it.

I did see him use it. You can't hide it behind the paper. I would ask that you don't use electronic instruments in the House.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Wait until I'm finished. And I would ask with you to withdraw as well, please.

Hon Mr Baird: Withdraw.

Mr Maves: Thank you very much, Minister, for clearing up the now muddied waters about the question of diesel generators muddied by the conflicting statements by the leader of the third party.

My constituents are deeply interested in measures being utilized to follow up on those throne speech commitments for conservation and green power. Could you expand further on what actions you are taking to do that?

Hon Mr Baird: In addition to the 1,300 megawatts of clean, green electricity that we have available to the grid today that wasn't available last summer, we've announced our intention to proceed on a number of initiatives, including moving forward with the renewable portfolio standard, something which has been strongly urged by our alternative fuels commissioner, Mr

Gilchrist. We've almost made a commitment that the government of Ontario will be buying 20% of its power from emerging renewables, something that we believe is important to show leadership by example. We're allowing for net meters and that people can have interval meters in the province of Ontario. All of these initiatives are incredibly environmentally friendly and are good news, not just for supply but as well for the environment.

CONTAMINATION IN PORT COLBORNE

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): This is to the Minister of the Environment. This morning, I once again joined residents from Port Colborne to hand out dirt bags to Inco stakeholders. This is soil from their yards. I'm going to send this dirt bag over to Minister of the Environment, Mr Stockwell.

We've just learned that the Inco consultants working for your government's community-based risk assessment process have been hiding horrific test results since last January, results that show high levels of cancer-causing nickel in the air they breathe inside their homes. Marcel Laroche and Wilf Pearson are here with us in the gallery. They have the two most contaminated homes of all. They're breathing in this air. They want to know, minister, were you aware of those results and what are you going to do about this immediate risk to these families? They are breathing in cancer-causing air.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): The Ministry of the Environment issued an order to Inco to clean the 25 homes in the area. Inco immediately began the process of cleaning up the site. The problem we have here, I say to the member opposite, is that 20 of the site's residents refused to allow Inco on to their properties. The problem is, if they refuse to allow Inco on the property to clean up the contaminated site; it becomes very difficult to clean up the contaminated site.

So I say to the member opposite, I would love to see these sites cleaned up. I know Mr Hudak would love to see these sites cleaned up. I implore the residents of those 20 units: allow Inco on, allow our order to be carried out, allow them to clean up your land.

1450

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Final supplementary.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I know these neighbourhoods. I know these residents. They're seniors, retirees and young families. They're hard-working, decent, honest people. They've been poisoned over the course of decades with carcinogens in their soil and in their air. They're not even safe in their own homes. The Inco consultants suppressed the data around the carcinogenic toxic air content for four months while these people continued to inhale it, along with their little grandkids toddling along their living room floors and the sidewalks leading up to their front doors. These people feel betrayed by Inco and betrayed and abandoned by this government. Inco is not their friend. Inco is their enemy. Inco's interests are diametrically opposed to theirs.

Why would you allow the data around carcinogenic air content to be suppressed for four months, and why isn't the government advocating for these people instead of collaborating with Inco in an effort to oppress and suppress them?

Hon Mr Stockwell: I say to the residents, and I speak to you very directly today, I'm your friend and the Ministry of the Environment is working to help your situation. I can say to you emphatically this: we've ordered Inco to clean up 25 homes. Inco has said they will. They've begun cleaning up, and they've cleaned up five of the homes that would let them in. The 20 that are left: you won't let them on the property to clean up your site. I ask you as residents, over top of the opposition's politics, please let Inco on your land, let them clean up your site, so that if the contamination is causing you problems, we can stop and move forward from there. I can only be that clear. We did our job. We said the site was contaminated. We ordered Inco to clean it up. Inco is cleaning it up. Let them on your property and let them clean it up.

ADAMS MINE

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming-Cochrane): I'd like to go back to the Minister of Natural Resources and ask him some questions about that dirty little land deal he was trying to pull off around the Adams mine before I called his office—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order.

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Coming from the NDP benches here is a bunch of stuff that isn't parliamentary, and I'd ask you to try and hear what they're saying. It's certainly outside the rules.

The Speaker: Yes, we will listen, and I will ask the table to listen as well. I would ask all members on all sides to be careful. The temperature is getting up in here. We're at the point now where we'll start throwing people out. I would ask everybody, in their language and in their actions, including what they're using in here, to please adhere.

During some of the discussions we had ministers talk about, members of this House talk about the decorum in here. I hope those same people will go to their colleagues who are misbehaving, say the same things they said in their speeches and help the Speaker try and control what happens in here. I hope the members who have said that in their speeches will also go to their colleagues. I think it would be very helpful if they did that.

The member for Timiskaming-Cochrane.

Mr Ramsay: I'd like to go back to the Minister of Natural Resources and ask him about this dirty little land deal up at the Adams mine that he was trying to pull off before I called his office in early April. Both you and the deputy minister have said there would be a 60-day review. According to the Deputy Premier, she stated that shortly you would be giving us the details of that.

Yesterday you stated that the MNR staff had looked at this deal in 1998.

Minister, I have confirmed today that the parcel of land you referred to was almost half the size of the piece that we're talking about today. Now Mr Cortellucci, your biggest donor, wants almost twice as much land as was originally contemplated in the Adams mine dump proposal EA. Why are you prepared to sell Mr Cortellucci almost twice the land that was considered back in 1998, that was really necessary to facilitate this project?

Hon Jerry J. Ouellette (Minister of Natural Resources): The only thing dirty about this deal is the way the opposition is trying to present it in the Legislature.

Quite frankly, this went through an entire process in 1998, and it is the district manager's decision in this. What this member is trying to do is have the politicians get involved and make decisions and circumvent the process, and we will refuse to do that. Very clearly this land that he is speaking about contains the monitoring stations, the dams, the holding ponds and buildings that were part of the original mining lease when this took place.

Mr Ramsay: Minister, it's twice the size that was contemplated and discussed in the EA. The reason it's dirty is because there's no transparency of this. You didn't tell anybody about it until we discovered it, and then you decided to slap on the 60-day review. That's what happened. I've checked with the First Nations bands, both the Nishnawbe and the Matachewan, and as of yet your office has not consulted with them.

Also, three weeks ago, your Kirkland Lake district manager received a counter-offer that offered 36% more money for that land in question, and yet we haven't had any response as to what you're doing and who you're talking to. There's been no response to that or with whom you're discussing and consulting about this. We don't know what the status of that counter-offer is.

Minister, can you assure me today that you are not prepared any longer to sell this land to your biggest contributor, Mr Cortellucci?

Hon Mr Ouellette: What I can assure is that we receive thousands of requests for lands on an annual basis at the Ministry of Natural Resources. Each and every single one of those is determined on the unique and individual merits of the case. We will ensure that the proper process is complied with within the Ministry of Natural Resources.

VISITORS

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): Before I start my question I would just like to point out that my son's class from Bracebridge and Muskoka Lake Secondary School is in the west gallery with their teacher, Alf Cowling. Now that I've significantly embarrassed my son, I'll go on with my question.

Interjection.

Mr Miller: He's in the third row. Stand up, Stuart.

MARS DISCOVERY DISTRICT

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): My question is for the Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation. Minister, it is my understanding that you recently participated in the groundbreaking ceremony for the MARS Discovery District. Can you please tell the House how much money has been committed to this project and what the money will be used for?

Hon Jim Flaherty (Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation): I'd like to thank the member for Parry-Sound Muskoka for the question about a project that is really visionary for Ontario.

The MARS project is about medical and related sciences. That's where the acronym comes from. The primary location in Ontario is at the corner of College Street and University Avenue in Toronto. We had the initial groundbreaking just recently in co-operation with the federal government and the private sector. It's symbolically located: it's about the life sciences, research and development, the participation of our university sector—the University of Toronto campus right here; the government of Ontario right here at Queen's Park as a facilitator; the financial services sector in Toronto; and, of course, the five teaching hospitals at the University of Toronto. It will have fabulous benefits for us, not only in terms of treatment, but in terms of providing challenges for our young people in the life sciences right here in Ontario.

Mr Miller: It is clear that this government is committed to investing in science, technology and innovation. The MARS Discovery District is a great example of that. The discoveries and innovations that come out of such clusters around the province are improving the quality of life for all Ontarians. I am glad to hear this government is supporting such an important project.

I understand that you have made a number of funding announcements since the House last sat. Can you please bring us up to date on these new funding initiatives and what the money will be used for?

Hon Mr Flaherty: The biotech strategy isn't just about Toronto. It's about all of Ontario; it's about all our great universities in the province. There was more than \$30 million announced by Premier Eves last year as part of our biotech strategy for our universities, from the University of Ottawa right to the University of Windsor. This is a tremendous cluster of innovation for Ontario, forward-looking over the next five, 10, 15 years.

In addition, we have invested \$70.8 million to support the research infrastructure of 109 projects at our universities across the province; \$22.2 million for the UK-Canadian consortium for structural genomics research; a Connect Ontario program—I know the members opposite are interested in this—\$55 million that brings high-speed telecommunication to northern and rural communities in Ontario. This is the great leveller, when we're able to connect across the province of Ontario, in northern and rural areas in particular.

1500

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): Mr Speaker, is the Minister of Finance in the House? I see her briefing book is still here. I'd pose the question to the Deputy Premier, but she seems to have split as well. Oh, she's back.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. To the member, it's not helpful. Member, take your seat. It's not helpful when we do that. It's pretty tough to keep order in the House when you do things like that. All members go in and out, on all sides. We have occasion to have to go in and out. The ministers sit here. There's no need to start off with that. It just gets everything going.

The member may ask the question now.

Mr Smitherman: Mr Speaker, I apologize. I did not mean the word "split" to be inflammatory, and I sincerely apologize. I do apologize for that.

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Deputy Premier, Minister of Education): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'm right here. I don't know how the member opposite didn't see me, but I've been in the House.

The Speaker: Thank you. It's not a point of order.

The member for Toronto Centre-Rosedale.

Mr Smitherman: My question is to the Minister of Finance and it concerns the state of automobile insurance in this province. I want to talk about some numbers. Today is the seventh anniversary of the introduction by the former finance minister of the Automobile Insurance Rate Stability Act. In the last quarter, the automobile insurers in Ontario have sought and received approvals for average increases of 19.2%. Seven months ago this House passed Bill 198, with regulations to follow, which promised some rate stability. Yet last week you yanked those very same regulations from the cabinet agenda, and we find that this week those regulations are being trotted around the province of Ontario and focus-grouped to consumers in an attempt to get fraud centred out as the reason for rate increases in Ontario.

So I ask this question to the Minister of Finance: Madam Minister, on the issue of automobile insurance, when will you stop hitting the snooze button and bring forward changes that will offer some protection to Ontario's hard-hit automobile insurance consumers?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Finance): To the honourable member, first of all, again this seems to be the day to challenge Liberals and their facts. It has not been pulled from cabinet. Good heavens.

Secondly, we passed legislation last year that laid out a legislative framework to improve the auto insurance system to make sure we could help to stabilize rates and provide benefits for consumers, and also try to fight the fraud and abuse that had slipped back into the system. We were very clear that the second step needed to be regulations. I don't know where the honourable member was, but we released those regulations publicly because

we were interested in good consultation and feedback from all the different groups. I don't recall getting a submission from the honourable member about how we could make those regulations better. I'd certainly welcome that advice. We've worked with health care practitioners, lawyers, advocates on behalf of consumers, consumer groups and insurance groups to make sure those regulations will do that job consumers need to have done.

Mr Smitherman: Madam Minister, you may think that consultation and feedback are some acceptable strategy when action is required, but they are not. The evidence is in that Ontario's automobile insurance consumers are being hard hit.

Stand in your place today and commit to a firm date, and then explain to us how it's appropriate, when automobile insurance is in a time of crisis in our province, that it takes you eight months to bring forward regulations that are acceptable and have the effect of offering some protection to consumers who are being dropped by the day and are seeing exorbitant rate increases. How long does it take to act in a time of crisis?

Hon Mrs Ecker: I distinctly recall that when we bring in legislation and we try and move that legislation through the House in a timely fashion, the opposition's criticism is that we're doing it too fast, that we're not consulting. So I find his new-found concern to be a little bit insulting.

In the stage that we're at now, as the honourable member well knows, we have put forward regulations for consultation. I will take this as acceptance by the honourable member. I'm sure he's had time to read those regulations. Health care providers have been working with us on it, insurance companies, advocates on behalf of consumers and consumers have been working with this government to make sure those regulations indeed expand the rights of innocent victims to sue, expand the rights for children, provide treatment guidelines for better access to care for consumers. I will take that—

The Speaker: I'm afraid the minister's time is up.

AGRIBUSINESS

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): My question is for my honourable friend the Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing with responsibilities for rural Ontario. A few minutes ago, the House was informed about the MARS project and how it will bring business, researchers and entrepreneurs together at a world-class centre of excellence here in Toronto. This is great news, representing yet one more example of how the provincial government is creating a strong economic climate which supports job creation and growth.

The members on this side of the House understand the enormous importance of Ontario's agribusiness sector and that agribusiness is the second-largest sector in our provincial economy. My question to the minister is this: will the minister inform the House about the progress he's making in ensuring Ontario agribusiness continues to be a global leader?

Hon Ernie Hardeman (Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I thank the member from Waterloo-Wellington for his question. His constituents are well served by the honourable gentleman, who is tireless in his work on their behalf.

Through the OSTAR RED program, the Ernie Eves government continues to forge and support working partnerships across Ontario, capitalizing on new and innovative opportunities for economic growth and leadership. The MARS Landing is an outstanding example of this type of partnership. MARS Landing brings together business, academics and government into a centre of excellence in Guelph dedicated to turning scientific potential into reality. MARS and MARS Landing will be closely linked so that the project partners—MARS, the University of Guelph, the city of Guelph department of economic development and Ontario Agri-Food Technologies—can combine agricultural research findings with innovations. This project will ensure rural Ontario biotechnology businesses and researchers can effectively use information and commercialization opportunities for intellectual property rights, international trade, risk capital, financial assistance, regulatory approvals and process, marketing and production.

VISITORS

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Visiting us today—they were here for question period—were students from Dundas school from my riding. I want to say that they're a very well educated group of people. They asked me if I knew the Sergeant at Arms, and when I told them that I sat next to him in the Legislature, they were quite excited that I actually knew him. So they've done their homework, they know how this place works, and I want to welcome them here today.

ROYAL ASSENT

SANCTION ROYALE

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I beg to inform the House that in the name of Her Majesty the Queen, His Honour the Administrator was pleased to assent to a certain bill in his office.

Clerk at the Table (Mr Todd Decker): The following is the title of the bill to which His Honour did assent:

Bill 28, An Act to resolve a labour dispute between the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association and the Toronto Catholic District School Board and to amend the Education Act and the Provincial Schools Negotiations Act / Projet de loi 28, Loi visant à régler le conflit de travail opposant l'Association des enseignantes et des enseignants catholiques anglo-ontariens et le conseil scolaire de district appelé Toronto Catholic District School Board et modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation et la Loi sur la négociation collective dans les écoles provinciales.

VISITORS

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: visiting us today from Thorold are Anne and Dominique Forgeron. I hope others will join me in welcoming them to this, their Legislature.

1510

PETITIONS

DIABETES TREATMENT

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly:

"Whereas type 1 diabetes is a life-altering condition and is the leading cause of blindness, amputation, kidney failure and heart disease in Ontario;

"Whereas research has proven that an insulin pump not only prevents complications but also reverses it by putting a regular amount of insulin into the body;

"Whereas the cost of an insulin pump prevents most Ontarians from using it;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"To provide funding for the cost of an insulin pump and ongoing supplies so that the citizens of Ontario who require this treatment can benefit."

I'm pleased to join the dozens of my constituents who have signed this petition.

ITER FUSION PROJECT

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It's my pleasure to present a petition on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham, as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the proposed ITER fusion research facility would result in 68,000 person-years of employment and an estimated \$9.4 billion in foreign investment;

"Whereas ITER would bring international scientists and researchers to Canada and place our nation in the forefront of new developments in research and technology;

"Whereas ITER is strongly supported by business, labour, educators, elected officials and citizens throughout Ontario and "Durham region, the host community;

"Whereas the province of Ontario has already recognized the economic importance of ITER to Canada and the world by committing \$300 million to support the Canadian ITER bid;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows: that the Parliament of Ontario take the necessary steps to strengthen the Canadian bid for the ITER research facility, including the commitment of more funds and other resources to support a successful Canadian bid; and that the province of Ontario ask the federal government to show the leadership and commitment necessary for Canada to win the ITER bid."

I'm pleased to sign and support this very important initiative from the municipality of Clarington, including its leader, Mayor John Mutton.

HYDRO RATES

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): First, I'd like to thank Cheryl Frenette and those good folks at Hillside General Store at the top of the hill in Laird township, at Pumpkin Point Road, for getting these signatures for us.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Harris-Eves government has mismanaged the electricity policy of the province of Ontario;

"Whereas last fall the McGuinty Liberal call for rebates, although fiercely rejected by the government, gained huge public support. With no options open, the government introduced and passed a plan to rebate \$75 to customers and place a cap on electricity commodity prices at 0.043 per kilowatt hour;

"Whereas Mike Brown, MPP, has been fighting for rural rate assistance;

"Whereas the Ernie Eves government forces Great Lakes Power customers to pay into a fund for rural rate assistance; and

"Whereas rural rate assistance would reduce the distribution bills for customers by hundreds of dollars each year;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, support the efforts of Mike Brown, MPP, to have rural rate assistance extended to the Great Lakes Power service area immediately."

I agree with my constituents. The ones who signed these petitions are mostly from Echo Bay, Desbarats, Bruce Mines and from St Joseph Island.

SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas some motorists are recklessly endangering the lives of children by not obeying the highway traffic law requiring them to stop for school buses with their warning lights activated;

"Whereas the current law has no teeth to protect the children who ride the school buses of Ontario, and who are at risk and their safety is in jeopardy;

"Whereas the current school bus law is difficult to enforce since not only is the licence plate number required, but positive identification of the driver and vehicle as well, which makes it extremely difficult to obtain a conviction;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the measures contained in private member's Bill 112, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to protect children while on school buses, presented by Pat Hoy, MPP, Chatham-Kent Essex, be immediately enacted;

"Bill 112 imposed liability on the owner of a vehicle that fails to stop for a school bus that has its overhead red signal lights flashing; and

"We ask for the support of all members of the Legislature."

This is signed by a number of residents from Cottam and Leamington, and I, too, have signed the petition.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): I'm pleased to present this petition, signed by 2,300 Wilfrid Laurier graduate students and the Canadian Federation of Students. It's to the Legislative Assembly.

"Whereas operating grants per capita for universities in Ontario are now at the lowest of any province in Canada; and

"Whereas average tuition fees in Ontario are the second-highest in Canada; and

"Whereas average undergraduate tuition fees in Ontario have more than doubled in the past 10 years; and

"Whereas tuition fees for deregulated programs have, in certain cases, doubled and tripled; and

"Whereas Statistics Canada has documented a link between increasing tuition fees and diminishing access to post-secondary education; and

"Whereas four other provincial governments have taken a leadership role by freezing and reducing tuition fees;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

"Freeze tuition fees for all programs at their current levels, and

"Restore government funding to public education, and

"Take steps to reduce the tuition fees of all graduate programs, post-diploma programs and professional programs for which tuition fees have been deregulated since 1998."

Since this is my alma mater, I'm pleased to sign it.

RIGHTS INFORMATION FOR CHILDREN

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the availability of rights information for children under provincial care is legislated under section 108 of the Child and Family Services Act; and

"Whereas the child advocate testified at the inquest into the death of Stephanie Jobin that the Ministry of Community, Family and Children's Services has prevented the office from publishing rights information for the past three years; and

"Whereas seven children have died in the care of this government; and

"Whereas the Office of the Child Advocate would indicate that prior to this government, the last questionable death in care was in 1977;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to act immediately to permit the Office of the Child Advocate to publish and distribute this essential, legislated rights information for Ontario's children in care, as well as establish a Web site for the Office of the Child Advocate."

I will affix my signature to this petition because I am in full agreement.

HYDRO RATES

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): I have a petition that's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas electricity bills have skyrocketed under the Harris-Eves government's flawed electricity plan; and

"Whereas some consumers have signed higher fixed-rate contracts with retailers, without adequate consumer protections; and

"Whereas the Harris-Eves government has failed to address electricity supply shortages in Ontario, forcing the purchase of American power at premium prices, driving up prices still further; and

"Whereas the Harris-Eves government appointed a board of directors for Hydro One that has been paying themselves extravagant salaries, compensation packages and severances for senior executives; and

"Whereas Hydro One bought 90 municipal utilities, serving about 240,000 people across Ontario, at premium prices and with borrowed funds. These purchases with borrowed funds have increased Ontario's debt burden; and

"Whereas the Harris-Eves government has added additional fees and taxes on to local electricity distribution companies. These charges have also been passed along to consumers;

"Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, demand that the Harris-Eves government take immediate action to ensure that Ontarians have fair and reasonable prices for the necessary commodity of electricity in Ontario and that the Harris-Eves government and its leader Ernie Eves call a general election on the instability of the energy market so that Ontarians may have a voice on this issue."

This has been signed by about 25 individuals from my riding. I agree with it and I affix my signature to it, and I'm handing it over to Kaitlynn-Rae, one of our pages.

1520

TURKEY POINT BEACH

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): I wish to present 400 signatures on this petition from the Turkey Point area. It's a petition presented to our Minister of Natural Resources, Jerry Ouellette, at a meeting with key stakeholders yesterday. It's entitled "Clean Our Beaches."

"We, the undersigned occupants that reside at or visit Turkey Point for recreational purposes, have concerns

that the beach in front of Ordnance Avenue, being unsafe, dirty and a potential haven for E. coli, Lyme disease, West Nile virus etc—a safe environment should be mandatory for families and children who want to enjoy the beach. To rectify the situation, we the taxpayers demand safety above all and that our pristine public beaches be cleaned, weeds cut and manicured, and all forms of idle stinkponds be removed. Rocks should also be considered, moved and relocated elsewhere, for public parking and walking safety. To rectify the situation, we the taxpayers that employ the MNR employees through hard-earned tax dollars would like to see this matter acted on. If after years of these endless demands on deaf ears are not met, we as individual taxpayers will see to the necessary arrangement of cleanup as to offset any cost to the government that represents we the taxpayers.”

This petition concerning management of the beach-wetland area at Turkey Point is not in the required format, Speaker, but I wish to forward these views. I affix my signature to it and I will convey it to the clerks’ table by a page from my riding, Aja Sutton from south of Simcoe.

HOME CARE

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington):

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas well-managed and adequately funded home health care is a growing need in our community; and

“Whereas the provincial government has frozen community care access centre budgets, which has meant dramatic cuts to service agency funding and services to vulnerable citizens, as well as shortened visits by front-line workers; and

“Whereas these dramatic cuts, combined with the increased complexity of care for those who do qualify for home care, has led to an impossible cost burden to home care agencies; and

“Whereas the wages and benefits received by home care workers employed by home care agencies are well below the wages and benefits of workers doing comparable jobs in institutional settings; and

“Whereas front-line staff are also required to subsidize the home care program in our community by being responsible for paying for their own gas and for vehicle maintenance; and

“Whereas other CCACs and CCAC-funded agencies across the province compensate their staff between 29 cents and 42.7 cents per kilometre; and

“Whereas CCAC-funded agency staff in our own community are paid 26 cents a kilometre, with driving time considered as ‘hours worked’;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To act now to increase funding to the CCAC of Kingston, Frontenac, Lennox and Addington in order for it to adequately fund service agencies so they can fairly compensate front-line workers.”

I will sign my signature to this petition because I am in full agreement.

TRAFFIC TICKETS REINSTATEMENT FEE

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands):

This is a very short petition signed by about 80 individuals, and it states as follows:

“We, the undersigned, believe that the \$100 reinstatement fee currently being charged by the Ministry of Transportation for forgetting to pay a traffic ticket is an extremely unfair revenue grab which does not suit the offence. Furthermore, due to the fact that the courts may have a wrong address to send a warning letter to, we believe a warning-of-intent letter giving an appropriate period to pay would better serve the purpose of having a ticket paid, opposed to the current ‘you’re suspended’ notice. We also note that under the current system, a citizen could also face a criminal offence without knowing that they have been suspended.”

I’d like to file this. I agree with it, and I’m handing it to our page, Sarah.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

“Whereas the Eves government has increased the fees paid by seniors and the most vulnerable living in long-term care facilities by 15% or \$7.02 per diem effective August 1, 2002; and

“Whereas this fee increase will cost seniors and our most vulnerable more than \$200 a month; and

“Whereas this increase is 11.1% above the rent increase guidelines for tenants in the province of Ontario; and

“Whereas the increase in the government’s own contribution to raise the level of long-term-care services this year is less than \$2 per resident per day; and

“Whereas according to the government’s own funded study, Ontario ranks last amongst comparable jurisdictions in the amount of time provided to a resident for nursing and personal care; and

“Whereas the long-term-care funding partnership has been based on government accepting the responsibility to fund the care and services that residents need; and

“Whereas government needs to increase long-term-care operating funding by \$750 million over the next three years to raise the level of service for Ontario’s long-term-care residents to those comparable in Saskatchewan back in 1999; and

“Whereas this province has been built by seniors who should be able to live out their lives with dignity, respect and in comfort in this province;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Demand that Premier Eves reduce his 15% fee increase on seniors and the most vulnerable living in long-term-care facilities and increase provincial government support for nursing and personal care to adequate levels."

I affix my signature. I'm in agreement.

OPPOSITION DAY

INSURANCE

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): I move that the Legislative Assembly directs the government of Ontario to correct their failure to protect Ontario consumers who are experiencing skyrocketing automotive, home and commercial insurance rates, and who are having difficulty obtaining reasonable insurance coverage or are being dropped as loyal customers, even in cases where there has been no change in their risk factors. It's addressed to the Premier.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): This is opposition day number 3. The Chair recognizes the member for Toronto Centre-Rosedale.

Mr Smitherman: It's an honour for me to have the opportunity, on behalf of my party, to speak to this opposition day motion.

We bring this opposition day motion forward today in the names of hundreds of thousands of Ontario motorists, homeowners and business operators who have had been experiencing extraordinary hardship in the provision of insurance in Ontario. Our objectives in bringing this issue forward are clear: it's our obligation as an opposition party to bring forward issues and to force the government to act in areas where in the last long while they have demonstrated a severe unwillingness to do so. Their inaction in the face of a growing, mounting crisis is a serious problem, and it is something we look forward to working very hard to address.

Our objectives with respect to insurance are very clear. Particularly with respect to automobile insurance, it's our obligation and our responsibility to ensure that those who are injured have fair and rapid access to appropriate medical rehab services. We see the obligation to reduce and stabilize auto insurance premiums in Ontario and to enhance access to automobile insurance through a move to a more competitive marketplace.

It's very clear that the Harris-Eves government has failed to fulfill its promises to reduce and stabilize auto insurance rates in Ontario. It is here, on the seventh anniversary of the introduction by the now Premier of the automobile rate stability act, that we find ourselves in a debate when 19.2% is the average rate of increase for automobile insurance in Ontario.

We say as well that the government has failed in its obligation to create a regulatory environment that will adequately protect loyal consumers who, through no change in their own risk factors, have found themselves in difficult problems or being dropped by insurance

carriers. This is a failure on the part of a government that likes to name bills in populist ways but doesn't very much like to bring forward the necessary regulatory changes in a highly complex marketplace, one that is highly regulated, to make sure the protection of consumers is at the foundation of the government's responsibility. Today we look across the way at a government that every single day seems more like a government with attention deficit disorder, a government that seems unable, in a time of crisis, like the one that is facing people in the insurance marketplace in Ontario, to act in their interest and protect them against the problems you will hear about.

1530

Over the course of this afternoon nine Liberal MPPs will speak to you, and many of them will raise hardship cases, anecdotal circumstances that are backed up by some of the following numbers. I'll put a few numbers on the record early on. Average individual increase in automobile insurance premiums in the last quarter—many of these approvals given already to insurance companies but with the message not having been received yet in the envelope at the homes of insurance consumers across Ontario—19.2%. Average individual increase in auto insurance over the past four years: 40%. The Facility Association, the insurer of last resort, has in the last year or so gone from providing services, insurance, for 1.2% of Ontario's automobile insured—moved in little over one year from 1.2% of the marketplace to 3% of the marketplace. There's been a 500% increase—a 500% increase—in the cost of medical rehab services since 1991. The medical rehab cost associated with automobile insurance accidents has risen from \$308 million in 1991 to \$1.5 billion—\$1.5 billion—and still rising, an increase of some 500%.

We know as well that the automotive insurance industry has paid out more in premiums, not even including administrative costs—they pay out \$1.02 for every dollar of premiums they take in.

So we ask ourselves, in the face of that kind of compelling information, what kind of action have we seen from our government? In answers, or non-answers, to questions today, the Minister of Finance has acknowledged what? She's acknowledged that a government bill passed in December 2002. She has acknowledged as well that, notwithstanding her claims that much conversation has gone on, no regulation has been brought forward to the cabinet in this province that will begin to offer some stabilization of rates. That inaction in the face of the crisis that exists in the auto insurance and broader insurance marketplace in Ontario is a further example of the extent to which that minister, the Minister of Finance, keeps hitting the snooze button in the hope that this issue will go away. Well, it's not going away. Today we take this opportunity to hold this government to account.

For those people who are watching at home, settle in for the next two hours and 25 minutes and you will hear and you will see the stories of you and your family and your neighbours. You will hear from the government lots

of repetition of the same words that are designed to give you comfort, but words that have failed you, because today is the seventh anniversary of the introduction of a bill which had this laudatory explanation that went with it. In June 1996, Ernie Eves, the then Minister of Finance, introduced Bill 59, An Act to provide Ontario drivers with fair, balanced and stable automobile insurance and to make other amendments related to insurance matters.

Seven years to the day, the average rate of increase for automobile insurance in the province of Ontario in the last quarter: 19.2%. That is the record of the government of the day. We call upon them to act in a way that will protect consumers and ensure that the Ontario insurance marketplace is a healthy one where competition is at the backbone of it and that we have the benefit, as those who are seeking a compulsory service, of a competitive marketplace and services that are provided when we need them and at costs that are much more reasonable than what we're seeing today.

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I say at the outset I'm going to be splitting my time with the member from Sault Ste Marie.

It's a pleasure for me to participate in the debate. I want to begin by some comments that I heard made by Ralph Nader, who was on *The Current* about two weeks ago. Ralph Nader was being interviewed by Anna Maria Tremonti about insurance rates. They were talking not only about Ontario, British Columbia and the problem that Premier Bernard Lord is facing right now. Ralph Nader was very good and very clear. He said the following, "Increasing automobile insurance rates have absolutely nothing to do with higher payouts being made—absolutely nothing." He pointed out that in fact Canada does not have the kinds of multi-million-dollar awards to victims of auto insurance because in Canada the courts have imposed a cap on damages that are awarded for pain and suffering. So he said that it is absolutely false for the insurance company or for anybody else to try and tell people in Canada that the reason their rates are increasing is because of these high awards. They are capped and they don't resemble what's going on in the United States. That's not the reason.

He said on the show that if people are really interested in understanding why rates are increasing, they should look at the financial statements of some of these insurance companies. If they would look at some of the financial statements, they would see that many of these companies have incurred losses by playing the stock market and that's the reason that drivers are facing increasing auto insurance rates. These companies have suffered big financial losses because of what's happening in the economy and, in order to make up for some of those losses, they're going to drivers in this and every other province and gouging them with high insurance rates. That's what is behind all of this. It was very interesting to hear him talk about that. He actually gave some Web sites where you could go and see how poorly some of these companies were doing and then make some inquiries about how much money they were jacking

up auto insurance rates. All in all, it was a very entertaining interview between Ralph Nader and Anna Maria Tremonti.

I want to talk about a conversation I had with a local broker about two months ago. He asked me not to reveal his name because he was very concerned that if it came out where I had gotten the information I had received, or if I talked about him in a public way, he could lose the contracts he has with some of his insurance companies. He provides contracts for a number of companies, and he was very fearful about that. We had a very good conversation. He called me, as a broker, to express his concerns about high insurance rates and about how he, as a broker, was being asked to apply, I guess I could describe them as insider rules, from insurance companies in order to weed out drivers that those companies didn't want to insure any more. He, as a broker, called me to say, "I've got all kinds of clients I have dealt with for years whom I am now trying to weed out because the insurance company that I provide coverage for, whom I get a commission from if I sell, is not interested in covering these drivers any more because they appear to be in a high-risk category." He was very concerned about people who are being cut off, people who had been clients of his for a long time and he was being forced to weed out, or, if they weren't being weeded out, the very high insurance premiums they now were being forced to pay.

The situation as he described it goes like this: you've got insurance companies that are not following provincial rules, which state that they can't discriminate against drivers who are seeking auto insurance. I guess in industry terms it's called the all-comers rule. The same companies are not following the rules which force insurers to take on the business of drivers, those same drivers who actually fit the underwriting rules that insurance companies have filed with the Financial Services Commission of Ontario. Instead, these insurance companies are developing internal rules, or side rules, which they are not filing with the commission. But it's these very rules that are being used to determine who will be covered and in fact who won't. Again, these are rules that are not being filed because, if they were, I'm sure the commission would be all over these insurance companies, telling them that it is discrimination, that it's against the all-comers rule and it can't be applied.

Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa West-Nepean): Give us the names of the companies.

Ms Martel: Stick with me, judge. Stick with me.

The insurance companies are then telling their brokers to use these rules, the insider rules, the internal rules, when they're dealing with drivers who want auto insurance. They're to apply these rules to essentially weed out those drivers who perhaps are high-risk or who maybe had a claim last year, those same drivers the companies don't want to provide coverage to any more. The result of these insider rules being applied by brokers is that many drivers are being forced into a high-risk class for insurance, so they're seeing their premiums being driven

up substantially. The other result is that they're being denied auto insurance from that broker and that company.
1540

What was most interesting is that the broker I was dealing with told me that he was told very clearly by one of the companies that he provides insurance for that their company was expecting a backlash from the public because so many drivers are being turned away from companies they've had insurance with for a long time, or they're being forced into a high-risk category and are watching their insurance premiums increase substantially.

The judge wanted some names. The best I can give him, for starters, comes from the February 17, 2003, Thompson's World Insurance News. I'm going to read some of this into the record because I thought it was very important and because Mr Sampson is quoted in here as well. I'll get to him. But the February 17, 2003, issue of Thompson's World Insurance News has two articles that I'm going to reference. One is called, "Rule Is Ineffective, Dominion CEO Says." The second one is, "Take-all-comers Rule Posing a Growing Problem in Ontario."

Here's the first: "The take-all-comers rule in Ontario auto has forced insurers to act in an unfortunate but rational manner, Dominion CEO George Cooke says.

Insurers struggling to avoid business they don't want, and can't afford, in the face of that rule have developed numerous tricks for doing so. As a result, a rule intended to benefit consumers is having an opposite effect.

"He says this is further complicated by some companies who are believed to be scoring books of business. This is the process of using criteria, some of which is not permitted by underwriting rules, to weed out less desirable risks." Isn't that an interesting way to describe drivers? "Weed out less desirable risks." Isn't that offensive? I find that particularly offensive.

"The questionable data, such as credit risk, is not expressly used to non-renew risks, simply to pinpoint the ones that the company will encourage brokers to place elsewhere for other reasons." Isn't that lovely, how they describe people as "less desirable risks"?

"But when other companies see that a lot of new applications from a broker were previously with the same carrier and the broker still has a contract with that carrier, they are naturally suspicious."

"I've actually heard people say that if company X, Y or Z is the prior carrier, they don't want it," "it" being the driver. This is the way the insurance industry describes people.

I want to remind you that this is Dominion CEO George Cooke. "He added, 'To be very blunt, when one of your competitors is doing that (allegedly scoring)—particularly if you respect the competitor to be good at risk selection—when they don't want them, in a tight market nobody else wants them either.'

"This is when other companies employ some of the avoidance tactics, such as extending the processing period until the business goes elsewhere." So you've got a broker who has to bring the client in now, whereas

before they would probably provide a quote over the phone. No, now the broker brings the client in and asks them a series of questions—and I'll get to the questionnaire because I have a copy of that, too—and then that broker sends that application form to the insurance company. What the insurance company is doing, of course, is delaying dealing with the processing of the application form in the hopes that, if they delay long enough, the consumer who needs auto insurance is going to go somewhere else. That's how they weed out some of the less desirable risks.

"Mr Cooke says he can't say with certainty that scoring is going on, 'but I've talked to enough people that think it's going on, so chances are there is likely some of it going on, so I would guess FSCO is pretty busy checking into it.'" That's his quote.

"In response to this"—allegation—"FSCO issued a bulletin last July"—July 2000; Rob, you'll remember this—"reminding companies to abide by the underwriting rules they have filed with the commission," so telling them they have some kind of obligation—I assume it's a legal one—that they are to follow the rules they have filed with the commission, which says they can't discriminate against people with respect to auto insurance.

"Mr Cooke says Dominion remains open for business for the time being and is taking its share of the business 'that has to be taken,'" as if it's some kind of onerous burden to provide auto insurance to people in Ontario.

"He says, 'I think all of our brokers realize that there's an expectation that they'll engage in some front-line underwriting and that they will also be prepared to, if you will, share the stuff that people don't want,'"—"stuff" being high-risk drivers. Don't you find it offensive that CEOs would talk about drivers in this way? Stuff? Undesirable element wasn't the word—undesirable risk.

"Increasingly, however, other markets are less willing to take their share,'"—"share" being providing auto coverage for people who drive in the province—"and they're doing all kinds of creative things, I'm told—making it very difficult for us.'" You bet it's creative. It's really creative when you have internal rules that you don't file with the commission and you're using those internal rules or insider rules and telling brokers to apply them so you weed out bad clients and you don't have to provide insurance. No doubt they're being very creative.

"He says the effort continues to get rid of the take-all-comers rule as it isn't necessary in a competitive marketplace with more than 100 companies. He believes that interference in a market leads to the bad risks paying less than they should and good risks paying more."

That's the first article, which gave me quite a bit of comfort and assurance that in fact the broker I was dealing with knew exactly what he was talking about and was absolutely correct in his concern related to me that they were being forced as brokers to try and weed out people to whom these companies didn't want to provide insurance.

Let me deal with the second article. Sorry, I know this is taking a while, but I think it's important to get this on

the record. The second article, same issue, February 17, 2003, Thompson's World Insurance News, says the following:

"Take-all-comers Rule Posing Growing Problem in Ontario.

"The struggle to control growth in the Ontario auto market has made the province's 'take-all-comers' rule a growing problem for some insurers and brokers there.

"It appears to be leading to more and more broker cancellations as companies scramble to avoid the prospect of being the last market in a broker's office, Lanark Mutual general manager Jim Moffatt told Thompson's.

"The rule forces insurers to take any business that fits within the underwriting rules it has filed with the Financial Services Commission of Ontario. Changing those rules is a costly and bureaucratic process.

"The Insurance Bureau of Canada has been fighting to have the rule removed,"—fighting with this government—"and expressed disappointment that the provincial government's recent auto reforms didn't make that change.

"In a position paper on Ontario auto"—insurance—"last fall, the bureau stated: 'The rule no longer serves a public policy purpose, given the development of a specialized high-risk insurance market in recent years.'"

I think there is a reason to have a rule that says companies have to cover people, because if they didn't have that obligation—and many of them wouldn't—those people of course would be driving without insurance, paying incredible rates or being forced into the high-risk category.

"In lieu of a FSCO rule change filing, the best defence against unwanted business"—if you don't want to provide business to a driver—"is broker cancellations, said Mr Moffatt. This is not an appealing option for a company like Lanark, located near Ottawa, that wants to support its brokers as much as possible. The \$12-million mutual is now the only option in a couple of its brokerages. As a result, its growth in auto business in 2002 is about 32%, up from the 1% it usually maintains.

"There are very few tools for refusing business," Mr Moffatt said.

"We're just asking brokers to try and put it somewhere else. Do what they can." Do what they can to put the business somewhere else; do what they can to get rid of those undesirable drivers.

1550

"Although cancelling brokers is the swiftest way to control incoming business, some insurers have found other ways to work around the take-all-comers rule.

"One broker, who preferred not to be named, said some companies are encouraging brokers to take business elsewhere—even if it fits within their underwriting rules.

"This encouragement comes with the threat of cancellation if brokers don't comply.

"I'm surprised someone at the government hasn't stepped in here," the broker said." So am I, and that's why I'm raising it here today. Maybe the government will.

"Insurance Brokers Association of Ontario CEO Bob Carter said eliminating binding authority on anything but super clean business has been a popular tactic. In this way, an insurer can take a long time reviewing any applications that are sent to it. The hope is that by the time the company responds, the broker and his customer will have gone elsewhere for coverage." Isn't that great?

"Another stalling tactic has been to send an application back to the broker over minor technical issues, saying it isn't bound because it isn't complete.

"While these methods put unfair pressure on brokers, they are the lesser of two evils, Mr Carter said."

Here's a quote from Mr Carter: "If one option is to work around the all-comers rule versus cancelling a bunch of brokers, which one am I going to take?" This part gets interesting, because we're going to have the reference to Rob Sampson shortly.

Interjection.

Ms Martel: You're going to speak next, and I'm going to be interested to hear your response.

"He said the rule seems like a good idea in theory, but needs to be eliminated. It creates too many problems in a hard market, primarily that cancelling brokers is the best way to get rid of bad business. And those companies who are sticking with struggling brokers during these tough times should be commended." I agree with that.

"But the capital shortage in the market means these insurers won't be able to keep it up much longer.

"The companies that are picking up the additional business can't keep growing at 30%-plus a month and not burn their capital," Mr Carter said.

"So, there's going to be a day of reckoning some time in the spring or summer where those companies will have used up the majority of their capital and won't be able to write any more business."

"The only real solution is more capital. In the absence of growing existing capital through investment gains"—and I referenced that earlier when I talked about Ralph Nader and the blow that the insurance companies have suffered—"finding ways to increase the flow of capital into the market is the key. It is hoped this can be achieved by improving the prospect for profit through the current auto reforms."

Here's the quote: "This is precisely the goal, said MPP Rob Sampson, who is spearheading the legislative reform." Are we going to gouge people even more, Rob, in order that these folks can make a profit? If they can't get their profits because they are losing on the stock market, then the only other option seems to be, "Stick it to the driver." Rob's going to speak next, so he can clarify what he meant by this, but my read of it—and I'm going to read it again: "The only real solution is more capital. In the absence of growing existing capital through investment gains, finding ways to increase the flow of capital into the market is the key. It is hoped this can be achieved by improving the prospect for profit through the current auto reforms." And to quote Rob Sampson, "This is precisely the goal, said MPP Rob Sampson, who is spearheading the legislative reform."

That sounds like “gouge the driver” to me. That’s what it sounds like.

I could be wrong. If I’m wrong, he’s going to clarify that. I know he’s going to speak next, and if I’m wrong he’s going to tell me I’m wrong and he’s going to clarify that. But on first blush, on the face of it, that’s what it sounds like to me. So there are the articles I wanted to reference.

What I also said I would do earlier is reference what the brokers are being asked to do to get rid of undesirable clients. I’ve seen the copies of the rules that brokers are being asked to use to weed out unwanted drivers. These are the aside rules, the insider rules, however you want to call them; the rules that aren’t posted at the commission that allow them to cut bad drivers off.

This one is called “Target Market and Binding Authority.” It talks about “five situations where we now require a written application prior to quoting or binding. They relate to applicants who have:

“(1) an accident benefit claim in the past six years or two or more of any type of claim in the past six years;

“(2) driving experience outside Canada or USA;

“(3) more than one moving traffic violation (past three years);

“(4) been cancelled or non-renewed by any insurer (past three years);

“(5) not had continuous insurance with the same carrier (past three years).”

Of course, what they’re telling brokers now is, “You’ve got to bring people in and you’ve got to ask them a series of questions. If they answer to any of the above, then you send that application in to us and we’ll lose it, conveniently, until your broker and your driver go somewhere else for insurance, because we don’t really want to cover them.”

I’ve got a copy of the nice little application form that the brokers have to fill out when these clients come in. Of course, there are all the boxes that talk about the things I just referenced: driving in Canada, driving outside Canada, any convictions that you’ve had etc. But there’s additional information on the bottom. Does the applicant live in an owned house or condominium unit, yes or no? Has the applicant lived at the same address for the last three years, yes or no? Are all applicants either retired or continuously employed for the past three years? If no, explain. How long has the applicant been known to the broker, and how long has the applicant been a client of the broker’s office?

What do those questions—at least the three about where you live and whether you own a condo—have to do with getting auto insurance in Ontario? What is that all about, and why are people being described as undesirable drivers because of these kinds of questions? You see, it’s these questions and the five points I just referenced that are the tactics that are now being used by brokers.

Interjection: By insurance companies.

Ms Martel: By insurance companies, imposed on brokers. That’s right. They are being used by insurance

companies but being imposed on brokers. The threat is, “If you don’t do it, we’re going to cancel your contracts,” in order to try to weed out people that companies don’t want to provide insurance to. That’s wrong, and I think Mr Sampson is going to tell us what he’s going to do about it when he speaks next.

I just want to give you an example of one in my own office. Bruce Gillies came into our office on May 1 with an auto insurance complaint. Last year his rate was \$2,128 for their two vehicles. This year the rate quoted was \$2,964 for the same two vehicles, no change in circumstance. They’ve been with Allstate for five years. When they asked why, Allstate said it had nothing to do with the couple’s situation but that rates were going up industry-wide because of the increased costs of claims. When we talked to him today, he found that in fact they had been able, through much scrambling, to find a little bit cheaper insurance with TD so that they are only paying an increase of \$200 in their premium from last year to this. When he cancelled with Allstate, he was told that they said a number of other clients were having to do the same thing because of increased costs. So that is happening—

Mr Guzzo: Who did he go to?

Ms Martel: I said that earlier. He went to TD Premium, so he’s only going to pay a \$200 increase over last year rather than about a \$700 or \$800 increase. It’s still an increase, with no change in his circumstance: no claim, no conviction, nothing. Why?

In conclusion, I want to say that there is a serious problem, and what has become very clear to me is that auto insurance is becoming a very serious political issue again. It is in Newfoundland, it is for Bernard Lord, and it is becoming so in this province again. I see that because of the people coming through my door who are being told they can’t get insurance any more or they’re going to have to pay substantially higher rates to get it. I think that before we’re finished, public auto insurance is going to become a political issue again, and I for one would welcome that very much.

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre): I’m going to try very hard not to be political in my remarks today. I’ve had nearly 40 years’ experience in the insurance business, some as an insurance broker representing my clients, some as an insurance executive, and some as a lowly junior underwriter. I think it’s safe to say that I know more about the insurance industry than anybody in this room here today.

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): That’s arrogant.

Mr Wettlaufer: I don’t say that very humbly, I say to the member for Sault Ste Marie. They do say that a little knowledge is worse than no knowledge, and I think that has been amply demonstrated so far today. The members for Toronto Centre-Rosedale and Nickel Belt—I know they speak from the heart on this. They have a concern for their constituents and the rising insurance rates. But I think it’s important to point out that since 1995 the average rate of increase in automobile insurance is about 2% per year. Those are facts.

1600

Interjections.

Mr Wettlaufer: If you guys would shut up and listen, you would understand. Just listen and you'll learn something.

Now, let's learn a little bit of history here. Prior to the Liberals coming to power in 1985, we had a system of insurance that was based entirely on the tort system. That means that a claimant could sue to receive some compensation for his or her injuries. Then the Liberals decided to bring in—1988 I believe was the year—a no-fault system. Let's see what a no-fault system does. A no-fault system means that no matter how serious the injury of the individual, his or her payment for those injuries is capped. It was capped. I'll tell you something, somebody very near and dear to me suffered a massive injury under your plan, and that person is still suffering today and is not receiving anywhere near what he or she should have received—and I'm not going to say whether it is he or she. So you do not understand what the system that you brought in did to the claimants of this province.

Then the NDP came in. They advocated public auto insurance, except they couldn't do it because they found that those jurisdictions that had public auto insurance, lo and behold, were losing so much money that taxpayers were having to subsidize the insurance premiums. They say, "Look at Saskatchewan's premiums. Look at how low Saskatchewan's premiums are." Saskatchewan doesn't have the number of drivers that the city of Kitchener, Ontario, does. Of course their premiums are lower. There are more cars on the 401 between Kitchener and Oshawa than there are on any other highway in the world. The congestion is unbelievable.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): That's not true. Go to New York; go to LA.

Mr Wettlaufer: Cars don't drive in New York or LA any more.

Anyway, what the people—

Interjection.

Mr Wettlaufer: You don't want to learn anything; all you want to do is heckle. Why don't you shut up and listen? You'll learn something.

They talk about the insurance companies. Understand something. I'm speaking from two perspectives: as somebody who looked after my clients, and as somebody who knows something about the insurance companies.

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): You said you knew more than anybody.

Mr Wettlaufer: I know more than you do. I know more than anybody in this room, I'll tell you.

Now, the insurance—

Mr Crozier: I want to hear you say it again. Tell me again.

Mr Wettlaufer: I know more about this industry than you do.

Mr Crozier: Why should I say anything?

Mr Wettlaufer: Don't say anything. You're best not to.

Mr Crozier: Step outside and say that.

Mr Wettlaufer: I will. I'd be happy to.

Anyway, let's talk about the issue. They talk about insurance premiums; they talk about the pay-out versus the take-in. Well, let's talk about the payout. I had the opportunity of going to Bermuda—on my own ticket, by the way—a year ago to talk to the reinsurance industry. I found out that one day, September 11, 2001, the insurance industry had a net payout of about \$33 billion. Now that could be plus or minus a few billion, depending on what insurance executive you talk to. It doesn't matter—a \$33 billion one-day payout. Because the insurance industry is a global industry, we all have to pay it. It influences absolutely every line of business, whether it's automobile, whether it's homeowner, whether it's liability insurance. It doesn't matter; we have to pay it.

I heard the member from Toronto Centre-Rosedale say the insurance industry is paying out \$1.02 for every dollar taken in. I presume he means the entire insurance industry, not just the automobile insurance industry. Is that correct?

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): I think it's auto.

Mr Wettlaufer: Well, actually your figures are low then.

Mr Smitherman: Not including administrative and other costs, I said.

Mr Wettlaufer: OK, not including administration and other costs. Including administration and other costs, we're getting very close to a \$1.40 payout for a dollar taken in.

When you look at the administration, what is the administration? The administration is in large part staff salaries for cleaning staff, accounting staff, underwriting staff and clerical staff.

Mr Gerretsen: You were paid too much for an executive.

Mr Wettlaufer: No, I don't think the insurance industry is known for paying any of its people too much. The insurance industry actually has a reputation for being rather frugal with its staff.

I will say too that at \$1.35 or \$1.40 payout for every dollar taken in, when you are only generating maybe an average of 1% or 2% on your investment income, you can't stay in business.

Insurance companies are broken down basically into two different types of companies. One is mutual companies, which are owned by their policy holders. Policyholders don't want to pay more as a result of their company losing money. The other is your stock companies. Who owns the stock? In many cases, your pension funds. Whoops, your pension funds.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Not yours.

Mr Wettlaufer: No, not mine.

It seems to me that the members opposite and the members on this side—I'm trying not to be political—are all very concerned about the value of pension funds these days. I'll tell you, if they're investing in insurance companies, they're not getting a very good return.

When I was in Bermuda last year, I asked them how we could encourage more investment in the insurance industry in this country. I wanted to know what they foresaw as the future of the insurance industry in this country. One executive was very blunt with me. That executive said, "Why should I invest any of my shareholders' money in Canada any more when I have averaged a 2% return over the last 20 years, and I have averaged a 6% return in Europe?"

Understand, an insurance company averaging a 2% return over a 20-year period—would you invest your money for 2%, I say to the member from Kingston and the Islands? The member from Essex would you invest your money for 2%?

Mr Crozier: It's all I'm making right now in Ontario.

Mr Wettlaufer: I know. So am I. That's what I am too, but that's beside the point—but not over the last 20 years.

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): You know more.

Mr Wettlaufer: I know, you know more. The member from Sarnia-Lambton, you're so intelligent. You know more than everybody else in here. That's fine.

Interjection.

Mr Wettlaufer: I'm sorry. I can't be any less condescending when you make the remarks you do. You make the remarks you do, I will be condescending. I guarantee it.

Mr Crozier: You are condescending.

Mr Wettlaufer: I will be more so.

The member from Nickel Belt mentioned that brokers are losing company contracts. They are. You're right. The brokers are losing company contracts. Do you want to know something else? In 36 years, 40 years, the length of time I was in the business, brokers have always lost company contracts. The reasons have generally been the same: the companies have been violating their own underwriting rules. Yes, they have. They did then too. They did it under the Liberal administration, they did it under your administration and they're doing it now. When it's the difference between staying in business and not staying in business, yes, sometimes you will violate your own underwriting rules. Do I think it's good? No. But that's not the point. The point is that they have to stay in business.

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There is the alternative, according to the NDP, that we just say, "Well, let's have public insurance." Why didn't you do it when you had your chance? I'll tell you why you didn't do it: (1) because there were tens of thousands of employees in the insurance industry who were going to lose their jobs; (2) because you saw there was so much money being lost in the insurance industry that you knew you could not go to the well and ask the taxpayers to cough up a couple billion dollars (a) for reserve and (b) for the payouts. That's why you didn't do it. You know that now. You can talk about public auto insurance all you want, but the Liberals know and we know that you'll never bring it in.

There is another alternative: we can fix the system as it is now.

Interjections.

Mr Wettlaufer: Hang on. Four years ago we started seeing a little bit of a problem. There was a blip in Bill 59—a blip. But we didn't know what was going to happen until September 11, 2001, when the whole system blew up.

A year ago, we sat down and started doing this review. Mr Sampson, Mr Chudleigh and myself started doing this review. You think you can have a quick fix. You can't have a quick fix without affecting the benefits received by the claimant. I am not going to allow a benefit to the claimant to be affected. We sat down and worked on this. You heard the finance minister say today that we met with the health care professionals. We met with the insurance companies, brokers and agent representatives; we met with the claimants; we met with a whole raft of interested parties on this, and they have made recommendations. The legislation was passed in December. The regulations should be introduced very, very shortly. In fact, we're very close to it now.

One of the things that you people don't realize—even I didn't realize how bad it was until we heard from all of the interested parties—is the effect of fraud on the system. We're not talking about just organized crime.

Mr Gerretsen: Executive fraud.

Ms Martel: Enron fraud.

Mr Wettlaufer: I don't think that has anything to do with the insurance business.

I'm talking about claims fraud. We're not talking about organized crime here, although there is some of that in the system. What we are talking about is the average claim being escalated artificially by the claimant who thinks, "I've paid \$100 into the insurance company over the past five years. I want some of that back now." I'm sorry, insurance premiums are not an investment. You can't just think you're going to get a little bit more for your claim. You should get what you're entitled to and no more. So we want to be fair with the claimant, but we don't want to go overboard. So we are addressing the fraud item as well, and that's going to be in the regulations.

Mr Gerretsen: When?

Mr Wettlaufer: Very soon. There is a recourse for consumer complaints. Consumers with unresolved complaints about their insurance companies have access to an independent, third party-complaint resolution mechanism. This province demonstrated leadership in handling consumer complaints.

Ms Di Cocco: Really?

Mr Wettlaufer: Yes, because in 1996, our government, by the way—and I'm trying not to be political. OK, in 1996, the Ontario government established Canada's first insurance ombudsman. On November 29, 2002, the Financial Services OmbudsNetwork became operational in the province. The Financial Services OmbudsNetwork, or FSON, is an independent national system for handling and resolving consumer complaints, and it governs all

products and services of banking, securities, life, health, property and casualty insurance companies and industries. The centre for FSON provides all consumers of financial services, including insurance, with a single integrated access point for responding to their general inquiries. So much for saying this government isn't doing something. Yes, it is.

Under the new system, individual companies have primary responsibility for resolving consumer complaints. There are three OmbudServices: the Canadian Life and Health Insurance OmbudService, the General Insurance OmbudService and the Ombudsman for Banking Services and Investments. There are many key features, including the requirement that the industry provide first response to complaints. So any consumer who has any complaint about any of the products or services, including pricing, of any of these industries, goes to OmbudService.

There are a few others who want to speak, and I think I will give them some time, so I will sit down now. Thank you.

Ms Di Cocco: I join in the debate this afternoon understanding the complexity, by the way, of the insurance industry. I'm pleased and proud of the member from Toronto Centre-Rosedale, who has taken this issue and certainly addressed the significant salient points on what is in this quagmire of insurance premiums that we have, as well as the whole industry itself.

I have to say to the member from Kitchener Centre, who has stated that he knows more about insurance than anyone else in this House, that I commend him for being that type of an expert. I don't purport to be that type of an expert, but I do have a number of individual cases who have come to my office with very specific issues dealing with what they have dealt with in their premiums.

The complexity of this industry is compounded by the reality that you can't run a business without insurance, you need insurance to drive a car and virtually everyone who owns a house requires insurance. It's important that the Ernie Eves government be held accountable and that it take responsibility to ensure stability in this vital marketplace and protect the consumer.

My office has had a number of examples, and I want to talk about a small business owner who has 12 employees and a small fleet of trucks, who has seen his premium go from \$24,000 to \$96,000 a year. His record, by the way, has been very good, and yet he was dropped from a company that he had been with for a number of years for no apparent reason. When he had to find another insurance company to maintain his fleet and do his work, the cost quadrupled. It went from \$24,000 to \$96,000. This is going to cause him tremendous hardship and it will probably put him out of business. That's what's happening when it comes to some of the constituents in my riding.

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Kevin Dafoe was dropped from house insurance. Again, he had no claims. He has contacted the insurance ombudsman and he has had very little luck. What are

people supposed to do when insurance companies, because, yes, they're having financial problems, are dropping their customers? What do these people do? Who do they turn to?

A retired gentleman has seen his car insurance go from \$535 to \$615, and this year to \$754. It went up that much in two years. He's got a 1993 Chrysler Dynasty and he's had no accidents. He says, "For us on fixed income, believe it or not, it adds up. Our taxes go up. My car insurance has gone up without having any type of accident, and it's an older car."

There's another gentleman who was in a car accident in January which was not his fault. His insurance went from \$1,600 a year to \$5,500 a year.

The issue is that they have been with a company for a number of years, they've had no claims, or they acquire a claim through no fault of their own, and they're either dropped or they cannot afford their insurance.

The government has a role to bring stability, because there's a quagmire out there when it comes to insurance and it needs to be addressed. I'm worried that the Eves government has no political will to address this quagmire.

Mr Kormos: Almost 15 years later, and what is one of the most volatile issues out there? The ever-escalating auto and home insurance premiums and the increased lack of access to auto insurance coverage.

I remember back to that period of time between 1987 and 1990. Indeed, I remember the 1987 election campaign when a Liberal candidate for Premier of Ontario, Mr Peterson, who found himself elected with a huge majority government, said, "I have a very specific plan to reduce auto insurance premiums." Mind you, the handlers and the script writers went scurrying. You could see the dust, because he may well have had a plan but they certainly weren't aware of it.

We enjoyed three years of intense debate around the plan. You see, we had had a no-fault component to auto insurance coverage prior to the specific plan. The plan by the government of 1987-90 was driven by the auto insurance industry. They assured the government of the day that should the government adopt the auto insurance industry plan of enhanced no-faults, with restrictions on the right to sue, indeed premiums could be contained and reduced. They weren't.

You see, the industry had been pleading for enhanced no-faults and constraints on tort, constraints on access to the court. So we had a government elected in 1995 that once again was the hand-servant of the auto insurance industry and, sure enough, they restricted tort and no-fault. Before much time had gone by, the industry had done a complete reversal and said, "No, we need tort if we're going to control and reduce premium costs."

The fact is that the insurance industry is an untamable beast, an uncageable monster, an unleashable mad dog. The insurance industry, with its short arms and deep pockets, has never been a friend of consumers in this province and has lured every government it's known into bed with it to serve its interests rather than the interests of

consumers, rather than the interests of premium payers, rather than the interests of the innocent victims of at-fault drivers. That's the case.

This industry cannot be regulated; it can't be contained. History has demonstrated that over and over again. Once again, I'm distressed to hear people in this Legislature showing even the slightest sympathy for the insurance industry. If they're not making money, if they're broke, if it's impossible for them to continue to function, then fold. Yet the auto insurance industry has been steadfast in insisting that it maintain a presence in auto insurance coverage in the province of Ontario. The auto insurance industry has fought forever and ever—and I trust continues to fight—the concept of public auto insurance tooth and nail. If they're not making money doing it, then why aren't they saying, "Go ahead and create public auto insurance, because we can't make any money doing it?"

There's something here that simply isn't kosher. If they're having such severe financial problems—and I want to address the September 11 myth; not that it didn't happen. But please, it wasn't cars that ran into those towers, it was planes. It was huge property damage claims and loss of life claims that were paid out by the insurance industry. It wasn't the auto sector insurance industry that paid out claims as a result of the incredible crisis—catastrophe—in New York City.

At the end of the day, the real crisis for the industry is because they chose to play the market. They chose to play the high-tech market. They chose to play a very dangerous and volatile stock market, a market that they should have known better about. Heck, my grandmother would know better than that. They wanted to play the market. They wanted to play the high-risk, high-returns game, and they lost. Once again, at the end of the day it's premium payers who continue to lose.

You can't regulate this industry. There isn't a province in Canada with private sector auto insurance or home insurance that's been effectively regulated: New Brunswick, a 70.6% increase in one year; Nova Scotia, 65.9%; Newfoundland, 63.8%; Alberta, 59.4%; PEI, 58.4%; 37.2% in Quebec, which has the private tin and glass coverage, as you well know, which accounts for the increase there that certainly isn't there in terms of the publicly run no-fault; and Ontario, 29.7%. And it isn't as if it is 29.7% across the board, because for some drivers it's 10% and 15% and for others it's 50% and 60%.

Good grief, Bernard Lord, a Tory, is toying with the prospect of public auto insurance in eastern Canada. State Farm has been the defendant in lawsuit after lawsuit and has been the unique subject of punitive damages after punitive damages for their abuse of their premium payers and consumers.

I read the resolution, but my fear is that the resolution reflects that the author has one flank firmly planted in the bed of the auto insurance industry and the other flank firmly planted in an appeal to nervous consumers, because it appears to suggest once again that this government can regulate this industry. I'm telling you the

industry can't be regulated. It's voracious. Its hunger will never be sated. It is not there to meet consumers' and premium payers' needs. One speaker has spoken of auto insurance, or the insurance industry in general, as a complex industry. It's not that complex. They make profits and seek to make profits by charging the highest amount of premiums and paying out the lowest amount of benefits, and then using monies that they have to invest in what they thought were sure things but ended up being some of the riskiest and highest-risk investments that this free market system could ever have offered—scams in and of their own right.

1630

Well, I, for one, haven't lost my passion for public auto insurance. I've cited the premium increases, beginning in Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland, from 70% to the lowest, 30%, in the province of Ontario. Let's move further west, to Saskatchewan: a 9.5% increase; Manitoba, our neighbours—where Gary Doer was newly elected with even a larger majority than he had before—with a premium increase of 7.2%. Let's avoid comparing apples to oranges; let's compare apples to apples, oranges to oranges. Vancouver, British Columbia—you've been there, I've been there. It's as comparable a city as you could find to the city of Toronto. There were premium increases in British Columbia of 7.3%. See, one of the ways that stability is maintained in the western provinces is that the investments made are not in high-risk stock market investments. Investments are made in communities and in the province, with lower rates of return, but things that do public good. Quite frankly, in the western provinces you've got the highest satisfaction rates of insurance consumers of anywhere in Canada, I dare say in North America—the highest consumer satisfaction of anywhere in Canada. I say to members of this assembly as they debate this resolution, you can either be friends of the insurance industry or you can be friends of consumers, friends of innocent victims, friends of premium payers. Because you can't be on both sides of the fence at the same time.

I understand where the Tories are. They've made no bones about it. The Tories have been so deep in the back pockets of the auto insurance industry that they're spitting out lint. The Tories are clearly and firmly and undeniably and intimately and cosily and warmly in bed with the auto insurance industry. Their history here over these last eight years confirms that beyond any doubt. I want to commend the Tories for their encouragement and sustaining of higher and higher premium rates. I want to commend the Tories for the prolongation of the crisis around auto and household insurance. Because what the Conservatives have done is put public auto insurance right there on the front burner.

I say to our Liberal counterparts here, get with it. Grab the baton. Seize the moment. I say to my Liberal counterparts, join New Democrats in persisting in calling for public auto insurance, in emulating the experience of Manitoba and Saskatchewan and British Columbia, who have the lowest premiums in this country, who treat

drivers and premium payers fairly, who don't discriminate against young drivers and who ensure that bad drivers pay what they ought to pay so that good drivers can pay the lower premiums that they deserve. Because in the auto insurance industry system that this government sustains, good drivers are subsidizing bad drivers. Good drivers aren't being rewarded for good records. Indeed, they're being punished with premium increases year after year after year. And they're being punished with insurance contracts that look good, but don't ever try to collect. Have you ever tried to collect on insurance claims, jump through the hoops? I've had to recommend to more and more people that they don't make claims for things like windshields and dented fenders and broken taillights or a cut convertible roof or a stolen radio. I wish more brokers would do that, because at the end of the day the fraud around auto insurance is that the innocent victim who makes that claim will end up paying for it two and three times over. In fact, this government's auto insurance regime has created more and more self-insured people—that's what that amounts to—where people really are in effect insuring themselves. They don't have insurance coverage. Don't deceive yourselves into thinking you do. You've got the contract. Oh, the insurance company had no problem cashing your premium cheques. When it's time for them to cut a cheque to you, by God, all the phone messages in the world don't get answered. You can chase that company's claims adjuster all over Hades's half-acre and still not find him. All of a sudden his number's unlisted and his answering service doesn't work.

This untameable beast, this ever, ever voracious appetite, this monster that can't be caged, should be put to sleep. And a meaningful discussion around affordable home and auto insurance is going to be a discussion around the decades-old examples of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and British Columbia. It's going to be the example of public auto insurance. I believe the people of Ontario endorse that. New Democrats certainly do.

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): It's a pleasure for me to rise and participate in the debate. I know my time is short; however, I would like to preface my comments by saying that I had the opportunity to spend 24 years of my life in the insurance industry as a broker. I don't know if that makes me an expert. I don't think so. I don't want to talk about expertise, so I'm going to leave it at that.

If I were someone at home listening to this debate here today, I would be somewhat nervous if I were a consumer, because I think the only way—first of all, I think we all realize there is a problem in the insurance industry today. I started in 1971. There have been problems in the insurance industry for the past 30 years. As the member from Niagara Centre mentioned, the Liberals tried to fix it, the NDP tried to fix it, and that's what we have today. So I would strongly suggest that in order to find a solution to the problem, a real, workable solution, one that is affordable to all the taxpayers of the province of Ontario, it be one whereby the government

would be involved, the industry would be involved, but also the consumers are involved. Because I would be somewhat nervous if I'd leave it to a Liberal or a Conservative or an NDP to fix the problem.

Mr Crozier: Or a Tory.

Mr Beaubien: I said that.

I would say that in order to find a good solution we have to get everybody at the table. First of all, let's look at why we're having some of the difficulties today. I know there are a few people in the room here today with a bit of insurance expertise.

We can talk about Saskatchewan, we can talk about Manitoba and BC, but we also have to compare apples to apples. Let's look at the standard policy we have in Ontario. It's composed of three sections: section A, section B and section C. If we look at section A, I think the insurance industry has that fairly well under control. The same thing with section C, which is the physical damage of the car, the collision, the comprehensive. There is some fraud, but I think they're managing the situation fairly well today.

I know my friend from Essex has some experience in the insurance industry. If we look at what's happened with section B, the auto policy, in 1971, when I started in the business, I think the premium for that section was about \$15 a year per car, in that neighbourhood. Today it's probably closer to \$1,000 per car. There's a number of reasons. I don't have enough time to get into why we're in that situation today, but I said that everybody has been tinkering with the system over the years, whether it's the insurance industry or whether it's the government of the day. But there is no doubt we have a problem, that it has to be fixed, because it's not sustainable to have the increases we have experienced in the past number of years.

It's interesting when I hear my friend from Niagara Centre talk about affordable insurance for the people. They're the government, if you recall, that put a 5% tax on insurance premiums. Now, this government is starting to reduce that. Remember that, about 10 years ago when they put a 5% tax on insurance premiums. And they're concerned about the availability and the affordability of insurance? Well, why did we put a 5% tax on insurance premiums? Can anyone tell me why? What's the 5% tax got to do with underwriting principles?

With regard to insurance companies, because I want to be somewhat balanced in my debate, there is no doubt that I agree with some of the comments that have been made on the other side.

1640

Mr Rob Sampson (Mississauga Centre): What's happened? Has the money stopped falling from the sky?

Mr Beaubien: I guess.

But with the insurance companies, there is no doubt that in the mid-80s they went on cash-flow underwriting. The reason they went on cash-flow underwriting—and they would underwrite anyone, no matter what the risk was—is because they were receiving a tremendous return on their money and they could invest it. I don't think that

was a good, sound basic insurance principle. They went away from that. I think they paid a price for that. So to say that the insurance industry itself is not at fault—I think they also have to look at themselves with some of the difficulties we have.

There is no doubt today, when we look at the benefits we're paying under section (b), that we have to bring it under control and rein it in. I'd like to read the costs with regard to some of the benefits: "Take physiotherapy. When the Ontario health insurance plan pays for a visit to a physiotherapist, the price is about \$14. When the injury is covered by the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board ... the price is closer to \$18.50. But when an auto insurer pays for a half-hour physiotherapy session, the cost jumps to \$60." I don't know why that is.

The member for Niagara Centre said we cannot regulate this industry, but I think the industry can be regulated by taking steps to regulate that type of spending. If OHIP pays \$14.50, why is the auto insurance plan paying \$60? I don't know and I don't understand that, but at the end of the day it's the consumer who pays for it, and that's not fair.

I've had just a few minutes to speak on this subject, but in closing I would strongly urge all the bodies that are responsible for this—the consumer, the insurance industry and the government—to come to the table and find a palatable solution.

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): I'm really pleased to be standing side by side today with the dynamic and loquacious member for Toronto Centre-Rosedale, a man who obviously has a concern, a passion for and a commitment to fighting for some real social justice. I'm really pleased to join in this debate.

The best political advice I ever got was from an old farm friend of mine out Troy way, in my riding. He said, "Tell them what's broken and how you're going to fix it." As I receive epistles from my constituents, I just want to share with the government the very real sense that they feel this system is broken. I want to put a human face on this issue for a few minutes, if I can.

I have a letter from a constituent in Dundas, who writes, "My son recently had his coverage cancelled. Not because he had an accident, a speeding ticket, or any other driving problem—solely because he missed a payment. Now they say he is basically uninsurable and is in the high-risk category.

"Can you explain to me why a missed payment puts you in a high-risk for accident insurance? Auto insurance should be based on your driving record, not on your payment record. A missed payment for house insurance does not render you uninsurable. Why should auto insurance be any different?"

Companies are now declining to accept drivers with no claims because of only one non-payment. We need to step in and regulate in that area.

Another constituent, the owner of a business called Canadian Chemical Cleaning Services Inc, writes, "We are a small Canadian business operating out of the new

city of Hamilton. This year marks our 20th year in business, serving with pride the Canadian pulp and paper industry, local steel industry and many more manufacturing sectors.

"This was a very special year for us as it marks our 20th year of operation with a 100% claim and accident free record which we are very proud of.

"We have been hit with shocking news," and with very little notice, from their insurance company. "While they have offered to renew our building and operations [insurance] at an increase of 185%, they at the same time have declined to insure our company vehicles of our service fleet.

"I have been scrambling for the past few weeks to correct this situation with three different brokers without any results.

"My personal renewal for my auto policy states the insurance industry has faced a 13% increase ... " in premiums, "not 185%. As of the 15th of this month I will be unable to operate my business and am at a loss as [to] what to do."

His commercial rates in 2001 were \$4,100; in 2002, \$6,100. The quotation that was given to this claim-free business owner for 2003 was \$17,424, which the company then withdrew, forcing this businessman to the Facility operation, which means he's forever tainted as a very, very poor risk.

An Ancaster constituent writes, "We are required by law to have automobile insurance. Yet I feel we have no protection with regard to rates. This year, again, [my rate] went up \$400. When we inquired why we were told, 'Everyone's insurance went up \$400.' We had no claims.... My husband and I feel helpless." There's no public transportation out here, she says; they have to pay the insurance.

It's very clear that something is broken, and it's very clear that together we have an obligation to try to fix it. We can do that perhaps through regulation. We might want to look at that in terms of some kind of select committee to get at it. But frankly, I'm with some others in the House who have expressed that if there's no other way to fix it, perhaps we have to do what a lot of us don't want to do, and that's to open our eyes to the possibility that maybe the government has a direct role through public auto insurance.

Mr Crozier: I'm pleased today to have an opportunity to speak briefly to this insurance issue. I want to say at the outset that I am speaking under some duress, because the member for Kitchener Centre has already told us that he knows more about auto insurance than anybody in this place. But I'll tell you one thing that he either doesn't know or won't acknowledge, and that is that the insured public in Ontario is hopping mad about insurance rates. I'm also reminded by the member for Kitchener Centre of those lines from the famous Mac Davis song that say, "Oh, Lord, it's hard to be humble," when you're perfect in so many ways.

I want to bring into this discussion today just briefly the plight that is faced by the thousands of brokers in the

province, along with the driving public they are trying to serve. Registered insurance brokers, I'm told, are leaving the field because the consumer complaints are overwhelming, and that really results in a lack of opportunity. It's been pointed out, and I would emphasize, that the climate is such in the insurance industry today that many companies are simply not interested in writing auto insurance. Companies are simply withdrawing from the market. This therefore limits the brokers' ability to offer choice to their customers.

I want to quote from the current edition of the *Insurance Journal*. The article is entitled "Auto Insurers Put the Brakes on Risk in Ontario," and it was written by Martin Beaudry. I can't refer to it all, so I'll just refer to a couple of sections of this article. It says, "Capacity is down, insurers are refusing new business, and those lucky enough to be insured are at risk of losing their coverage should anything happen"—should you have a claim, in other words.

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He goes on to quote Mr Denis Trevost of Allianz Canada and then says, "He says he is seeing 20% to 30% of his market being dumped from the regular insurance companies. Those then have to be placed with the sub-standard market...."

"Jim Thomson, office manager at the Timmins-based brokerage BMT Insurance, says, 'We are at a crisis now where people can come in off the street and I don't have a market for them. They don't even qualify for the Facility Association. To get in to the Facility you have to have been declined with a declaration rule by one or more carriers.'" So they're in this Catch-22.

It also says in this article, "Insurers are using what he calls 'predatory' practices to clean up their book of business. They are culling their databases to identify 'people that they want to get rid of. What they do is send a letter 45 days prior to your renewal, and they don't tell the broker. If you don't complete that form and send it back to them, you are automatically cancelled.'"

So these are some of the problems that brokers are facing in trying to service their customers. We have thousands of brokers in this province who are trying their very best to provide the best insurance coverage and protection that they can for their customers. So this is another part of this whole insurance problem that I tried to work with the member from Mississauga Centre on over the last six years. But it is the government of the day that has to bear the brunt of this. That's why we're speaking on behalf of all the insureds in Ontario who, as I say, are hopping mad. We have to get to the bottom of this problem and help the consumers of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate.

Applause.

Mr Sampson: That'll probably be the last time they applaud today, but anyhow.

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): Do a Wayne Wettlaufer.

Mr Sampson: Well, I'm not going to do a Wayne Wettlaufer for you. I'm sorry.

It's a pleasure to speak to this motion today, on a subject that sometimes I feel I know a little bit too much about. Indeed, I have had a chance to work with some of my colleagues in the House here on that matter, because I agree with some of the comments today about the fact that this needs to be a solution that works for the benefit of consumers, the ratepayers.

There are actually two types of consumers in auto insurance. There are those who, like many watching today, pay premiums on a regular basis and probably have never claimed in their entire driving history. Of course, their focus is on lower or fairer rates. They just don't like to see rate increases, whether they're the numbers that are attributed to the privately run plans or even the ones that my socialist friend from Niagara Centre referred to as fair—you know, 9% or 10% from some of the publicly run plans. I'll get to that in a few minutes.

Then there is that other class of consumers, who have actually purchased insurance and have unfortunately got themselves involved in an accident, either one in which they were partially or totally at fault or one in which they were totally not at fault. Their interest in this product actually changes a bit, because they're far more interested in what they can get out of this product that they purchased before the accident. They want to know what the benefits are. They want to know what services are available to them to help them get better and feel better. They want to know how quickly they can get their car fixed. Will it be fixed with old parts, or reconditioned parts or original manufacturer parts? They want to know, "Can I have a rental car while I get my car in the shop?" They want to know, "Do I get six rehabilitation treatments for my arm, or is it two?" The focus is very much on what it was they purchased.

On that subject, it is unfortunate, and I think there's a continual challenge for all governments that have dealt with auto insurance to try to make sure this product is simple to understand. I would argue to those watching and listening today that it's not simple to understand, unfortunately, and that much more work needs to be done by any level of government involved in this, whether they be here in Ontario or in Nova Scotia, or even in BC, to better describe what is in this insurance policy when people buy it. That will help people better understand and deal with the questions they have about what services are available to them when they get involved in an accident.

It's also fair to say, and I think people need to understand, that certain components of the plan, while they're called "no-fault" components, actually don't mean "no pay," unfortunately. I think it was the Liberals, and a lot of people don't know this, who brought in the reform initiative—I think it was continued by the NDP—on the repair to the vehicle side. It's "no fault," but it doesn't mean "no pay."

If somebody hits you and wrecks your car, and a lot of people who have called me have asked me about this, whose insurance company pays? Well, each person's insurance company involved in the car pays. If somebody goes through a red light and hits me, my insurance com-

pany will actually pay for the repairs for the damage to my vehicle. The insurance company of the person who hit me would pay for the damage to their vehicle. It's called "no fault." I didn't cause the accident, but it doesn't mean that I don't pay, or at least that my insurance company doesn't pay. A lot of people don't know that. That's actually the way in which the damage to the physical side of the car works in auto insurance.

That goes back to my point earlier that a lot of people don't know what it is they bought when they bought auto insurance. They say, "You've got to be kidding me. That can't be." That's the way it is. Whether you like it or not, that is the way in which the product is designed. That design, I think, started with the Liberals and continued with the NDP on that component of the product. Is it fair? There are arguments on both sides as to whether it's fair. That design was actually created to get lawyers out of the transaction, to stop people from suing other people and having to wait until the court dealt with the issue and the appeal before they could get the cash to actually fix their car. But one of the disadvantages is that it doesn't necessarily mean "no pay."

To some degree that's why you see the rate increases, by the way, in these public auto jurisdictions. I would say to my friend from Niagara, who says 9.5%, 7.2% and 7.3% rate increases in BC, Saskatchewan and Manitoba—or maybe it was Quebec; I can't remember which ones he named. It's three of the publicly run plans, and that's a model they would encourage for insurance to be sold in Ontario. I think the people viewing today would say, "Hang on: 10% rate increases. I don't think those are fair either if I didn't have an accident and I've had a clean driving record for some period of time."

The reality is, this is a product that's very expensive to sell, whether it's publicly run or privately run. By the way, the publicly run plans have kept their rate increases down by limiting the type of recovery services and product available to people who get involved in the accident. Remember that second group of customers I talked about, the claimants? The publicly run plans cap what's available to them for rehabilitation treatment and recovery treatment, and say, "When that's over, just go to the public health care system and get that." When you add those costs back on, the cost that the publicly run auto plans have pushed on to the publicly run health care system, you get back into double-digit rate increases like 20% or 30% per year.

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To say that publicly run auto is the solution because you can't trust insurance companies I'm afraid doesn't actually work out when you take a look at the hard-core facts. It's not just Canada, by the way. It's across North America and even in some European jurisdictions where this problem is seen.

The high rates are really a combination of three challenges, and we can deal with two of them. One, I think, is not within our ability to deal with, and I'll get to that one first. The rate of catastrophic incidents in this world has increased more than anybody had planned or envisioned.

Pete's right: 9/11 didn't have an impact directly on auto insurers because they generally don't do what they call reinsure. They generally don't go up to other bigger insurance companies, normally European, and say, "Protect me from some of the risks I've taken on in insuring the Ontario market."

However, most of the auto companies in this province also sell home insurance. Home insurance and commercial insurance are heavily reinsured in other jurisdictions, and that market has lost about \$100 billion to \$150 billion in reinsurance capacity since the events of 9/11. That is a significant hit to that industry that I think has had a dramatic impact on the ability of privately run insurance companies to offer both of those products—commercial and home, and auto—in Ontario. I don't think there's anybody who can argue that either one of those is manageable.

The second issue that's driving rates is, to a large degree—and I would argue in support of some of the comments here—the responsibility of the insurance companies themselves, which have had some difficulty in managing the cost components of their own programs, their own investment and management programs, and the way in which they sell and administer this product in this province. I've said that many times publicly directly to them. They are the author to some degree of their own problems and they need to clean up their act. I've said that. Some are trying to do that within the confines of the current product and some have yet to do that. I say to the people watching today, we will try to make sure they do that.

The third component we need to deal with is the fundamental product that's being offered for sale in this province in the form of auto insurance. I said that in 1996. I firmly believe it. This product needs to be continually tweaked and worked to make sure it provides consumers with what they're wanting—those two classes of consumers, the ones paying the premiums and not getting involved in the accidents, and you can't ignore the last one, which is the one that gets involved in the accident and needs the services for rehabilitation and the repair of the car. So with those two groups of consumers in mind, we need to modify this product and continue to redesign it to suit their needs and to make sure it's working for their particular interest.

I know we've started that with the legislative reform that was passed in December, which by the way the member who has this motion in his name voted against. In December he said, "Don't do it." Now he's standing in the House and saying, "Wait a minute. What I really meant then was that I wanted you to do it faster and I wanted you to do it more aggressively." You can't have it both ways, my friend.

To my friend from Scarborough, their other criticism of us was, "You never consulted. You rammed legislation down the throat of the Legislature and you rammed it down the stakeholders'." So we consulted on this thing. We passed the legislation in December and we went, I think it was, two full rounds of consultation with all the

stakeholders involved: rehab clinics, doctors, lawyers, physiotherapists, chiropractors, psychologists, brokers, insurance companies themselves, consumer groups—I could go on. I think there were a total of 100-plus various groups and individuals that we consulted with on this product design. We said, “Here are our draft regulations that would add the flesh to the skeleton, the bones, of the legislation. What do you think?”

Twice they came back and said, “We like this, and we don’t like this. Can you change this? How about adding that?” We went back again and said, “We’ve heard what you’ve said. Is this going to work?” Now we have before us a basket of regulatory changes that have sign-off from effectively all the stakeholders that are going to be charged with the responsibility of making this product work. It’s actually the first time in the history of auto insurance reform in this province that that’s been achieved. We took our time to consult with all the stakeholders, and now the member opposite stands up and says, “You took too long. You haven’t gone fast enough, and you haven’t gone far enough.”

Look, we think we’ve got a basket of reform initiatives that will work. The various stakeholders are prepared to work together to make it work and deliver some effective reform to auto insurance in Ontario, and I believe that in doing so we haven’t abandoned the interests of either those who are ratepayers or those who are claimants in the product. We’ve tried to balance the expectations of both those groups and the interests of both those groups in what this final product delivers.

Just so you don’t think that auto insurance is a singularly Ontario provincial issue, it’s not. And just so you don’t think that auto insurance is a national issue across the country, it’s not. There have been articles in various jurisdictions south of the border that have been talking about double-digit rate increases in Michigan and Ohio—you name the state; it’s happening there too. This is a very difficult product to manage, and it’s not because it’s privately run, I say to my socialist friend from Niagara. Even the publicly run facilities, and you have named them, have rate increases that are near double-digit. That’s without calculating in the cost they’ve pushed off to another level of government where they can hide it and pretend it doesn’t exist. Look, if it’s an insured accident, it should be paid by the insurance industry and not pushed off to the publicly funded health care system that didn’t have anything to do with creating the accident and shouldn’t have anything to do with paying for the costs of recovery.

I agree with the member for Sudbury that brokers are challenged by this current product design and are having a very difficult time servicing their customers. I say to the many thousands of brokers, either listening here today or reading this debate in subsequent days, that we need to provide you with a product that you can sell to your customers—that’s the business you’re in. And the business we should be in in this Legislature is trying to find a product design that you can offer your customer and can legitimately sell to your customer and go home

at night and say, “I’ve done some good service for my customer.” And we need to make sure there are not just one or two but hundreds, if you will, of companies that are prepared to build that product that brokers can sell.

That, in my view, will provide the relief on the rate issue that that first group of consumers, and frankly all of us here, are struggling with. You can’t force somebody to sell a product they don’t want to sell. That’s not the solution, I say to my friends in the NDP benches. You can’t force companies to sell something they don’t want to sell. What you need to do is find a product that they’re comfortable selling, that they’re comfortable financing, that they’re comfortable in building and servicing. Then you need to make sure, from the brokerage side, that that’s actually something people want to buy. Then you need to have the ability to finance that and price it fairly. You do that by having a lot of consumers wanting the product and a lot of companies prepared to offer it. I believe that the design and redesign initiatives we have before us in legislative reform that we dealt with in this Legislature in December, and in regulatory reform that will be coming forward shortly, will do that. It will provide a product that companies can offer fairly and are interested in offering, and that brokers can actively and aggressively sell to their consumers and customers throughout Ontario.

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Interjection.

Mr Sampson: I say to my friend opposite, I don’t have a problem with people wanting to make profit in this country. I do have a problem when they can’t make that profit and they start to abuse product designs to get to that level. I think that’s the issue we’re trying to deal with at this particular time on this product.

I will say one thing, and the problem is that there are no really good stats on this because people don’t generally come forward and offer themselves up as being involved in the auto insurance product, or any insurance product, in this manner: there is a tremendous amount of abuse, misuse and in some cases fraudulent use of this product in this province and we all pay the costs. Some people have calculated that—

Interjection.

Mr Sampson: I say to the member opposite from Sudbury, if you believe that nobody in this province tries to abuse the insurance system, then I think you are living on a planet that’s not this one.

Ms Martel: What about insurance companies using that money on the stock exchange?

Mr Sampson: I say to the member for Sudbury that this is a double-edged sword; there’s no doubt about that. We need to make sure there are companies who do not abuse the rights and privileges of consumers, but it’s a double-edged sword. We need to find ways to provide protection for consumers so that if any of this is going on in the system, it doesn’t come out of their pockets. I’m not prepared with my premium dollars—and I don’t think the people watching today are—to finance and pay for people who use this product for nothing more than to

make a buck at other people's expense. This is not a product where we should be prepared to accept 10%, 15% or 20% of our premium dollar going to treatment, for instance, that's not useful or doesn't provide any value, going to repairs of vehicles that are done fraudulently or going to providers who simply have customers show up at the front door and then leave, and then send the bill to the insurance company. That's not acceptable.

Companies do have a responsibility to police that themselves, and many don't, but we're going to encourage them to do that. I think, on behalf of ratepayers, the people who pay the premiums in this province, that we have a responsibility to make sure we do our best in product design and in policing how that product actually gets applied in the market to weed abuse and fraud out of the system. Every time that happens, it costs you and me money. That's not fair and it's not right. We will do our best to put together a plan that will deal with fraud from a government level and we will encourage companies to participate with us to do that as well. We will also make sure that the superintendent supervises the performance of all the players in the insurance product: rehab providers, brokers and, yes, even companies that should not be allowed to abuse the rights and privileges of consumers of this very important and expensive product that we all have to buy in order to drive cars in this province.

Auto insurance, any insurance product, is not a simple product to understand. I said earlier that it's part of our challenge, our unmet obligation to you, the voters, taxpayers and ratepayers in this province. We don't yet have a product that's simple to understand. I would defy any of you listening here today to pick up your auto insurance coverage document and read and understand it the first time. It's very difficult to understand, and that's not right. We need to find ways to simplify it. But we don't want to do that by lowering the benefits that are available to innocent accident victims and those who are involved in accidents and need recovery. We're not going to go to the public auto plan that does that, I say to my friend who likes to position public auto as a solution. That's not the solution. We're not going to cap the benefits available to innocent accident victims, as they do in public auto.

We want a balanced plan between monies that are available for those for proper treatment, and we want a balanced plan to make sure that if you were hit and severely injured in an accident, you can sue somebody for loss of income and extraordinary losses that were the result of that accident.

But to the two consumer groups we have, we need to make sure it's affordable. Auto insurance needs to be affordable in this province. By the way, in 1997, the average rate was about \$1,100. Now the average rate is \$1,200. That's eight years, a \$100 increase. Is that acceptable? I think our challenge is to try to make sure rates are lower. Somehow we need to manage that down, and we can with this reform initiative.

Mr Gerretsen: All I can say to the last speaker is this—and I realize he knows about this issue because he

studied it before; he wrote a report on it some four or five years ago—that people are hurting out there. People are all of a sudden being told that their rates are being increased 20%, 30%, 40% or more. They're being told that companies no longer want to insure them when there have been absolutely no claims made against them.

The government had this legislation passed last December. It's been almost six months now. They still haven't passed regulations, as was so ably pointed out in the *Toronto Star* this morning. It's about time the government did something about it. It's your responsibility. Yes, there may be fraud involved. There may be a misuse of some of the medical expenses that have been paid on behalf of some of the people who have made claims under their policies. That could all be true, but it's up to the government to protect consumers in this province.

There was an interesting article that I had an opportunity to read that was put out by Standard and Poor's. Let's just read what they have to say about this issue. They say: "Although higher automobile repair costs and auto thefts are the major contributing factors, the largest cost pressure facing the industry has been the rising cost of health care and associated fraud. In the past several years, the number of auto accidents has declined, but the injury claims have continued to increase." That is an issue that is completely within the government's jurisdiction and control. That's where they can do something about it.

They insisted that this legislation be passed last December. You may recall there were requests for public hearings. It was denied because they had to get on with it immediately. Now six months later, the regulations that are needed in order to put that framework into effect still haven't happened. What's been the result? The result has been that innocent people out there, who haven't had a claim on their automobile policy for many years, are having their premiums rise substantially, and we've all heard the cases where it's 20%, 30%, 40% and 50%. Some people's coverage has been completely terminated by certain companies, people who have never had a claim against their policy.

That's what this is all about. We can blame everybody under the sun and we can blame the international situation. We can blame 9/11. We can put the blame anywhere. But the responsibility of the government is to manage that issue and do something about it. What I'm saying to the government is, come out with regulations that will have one thing and one thing only in mind, and that is to protect the consumers of this province.

Mr Martin: This is certainly a timely debate, given that in most of our constituencies, I would suggest across the province, we're hearing about the issue of insurance over and over again, people calling in, asking us why they're experiencing these exorbitant, almost unacceptable and, in some cases, untenable increases in insurance costs.

In my own constituency I was talking today with my legislative assistant in preparation for today's debate. She tells me that small businesses have seen insurance rates

rise by as much as 50%. We had the Heyden Ski Hill not open this winter because they couldn't afford insurance. We have a couple of not-for-profits, only two of many—the men's shelter and Pauline's Place—having trouble getting insurance so that they can keep operating. Automobile insurance—that's what the discussion here tonight is about—has risen, of course. Long-term disability insurance is hard to get. If a person develops a long-term illness or disability, it must be proven the individual is permanently unemployable. The issue goes on and on. When you try to find somebody in the industry to respond to some of this, to help you with a case that you're trying to resolve, it is becoming more and more difficult with each passing day.

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I myself have written to the Minister of Finance of the government saying that my office has recently been inundated with calls and walk-ins from disgruntled constituents over the soaring cost of automobile insurance in this province. Many have seen their rates go up 20% to 40%, with most companies only renewing for a period of six months, presumably because the rates will increase again at the time of renewal.

Minister, with the increase in the cost of living, including increased gas, natural gas and hydroelectricity prices, many people are finding it difficult to afford insurance for their vehicles, even though it's mandatory, and I daresay that there are people out there today driving without insurance because they can't afford it, and they can't afford not to drive their vehicles. The reason given by most insurance companies is they have to compensate for the losses incurred as a result of 9/11. Well, you heard my colleague from Niagara Centre speak a few minutes ago about that and, as he says, that's horse feathers. Why should this occur on the backs of ordinary hard-working individuals?

I suggest to you that the people of Wawa, who are already reeling from the downsizing of their economy and their ability to have industry and provide jobs for people and the increasing cost of hydroelectricity—by the way, the Minister of Energy, who was here this morning, still hasn't had the courtesy to call to speak the leaders of that community about their hydro challenge, and I daresay he isn't going to be too interested in the issue of insurance where they are concerned.

There are people across the province in places like Windsor, Welland-Thorold, Sudbury, Port Colborne and Sault Ste Marie who are struggling with this issue every day because insurance, as we know, is mandatory. People have to have it, and in my part of the province, and I daresay in many other parts of the province, particularly rural Ontario, people have to drive their vehicles. If they're going to drive their vehicles, they have to have insurance. The increase in the cost of insurance is becoming more and more untenable and unacceptable.

So I think, and I believe I speak for my colleagues here, that as we go forward into the next election and we talk about public power, the issue of auto insurance fits the formula there as well. With year-over-year premium

increases over 20% and more and more people being denied insurance, public auto insurance is beginning to look better and better with each day that goes by. The insurance companies say that med rehab costs related to soft tissue injuries is the main cause of the increases, but the real reason is the steep decline in insurance company investment income due to the collapse of the stock market.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. The member for Don Valley East, come to order.

Mr Martin: The NDP believes that the driving public should not have to pay for big insurance's bad stock investments, bad stock picks. The evidence grows every year that public auto insurance is more affordable for consumers than private auto insurance. The rates are more reasonable, as well as more stable and predictable. Public auto insurance is now over 30 years old in places like Manitoba, Saskatchewan, British Columbia and Quebec. The year-over-year increases for the three western public auto insurance companies has been between 5% and 7%. The evidence from Manitoba, Saskatchewan and British Columbia is that it is not that expensive to implement public auto insurance because you are not implementing a whole new insurance industry from top to bottom. What you're basically doing is putting into law the fact that the basic package of auto insurance that people have to own in order to get a licence will be purchased at the same time—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Windsor-St Clair, come to order.

Mr Martin: —that they get their licences through a publicly owned not-for-profit corporation. If people want additional insurance or if they want additional coverage, they can still purchase that from a private insurance company. Under an NDP driver-owned non-profit scheme, any surplus that's generated would either be reinvested or distributed to drivers. By law, driver-owned auto insurance would not be allowed to subsidize government operations.

In the couple of minutes that I have left, I just want to address very briefly the issue of why we didn't do it when we were government. You will remember that in the early 1990s we had a recession going in this province that was the worst since the Depression. That was certainly one of the reasons why we didn't. However, it should be made clear that the NDP government of the day did not rule out implementing public auto insurance at a later date. With the skyrocketing premium rates of recent years, now may be the time.

I remember the debate that happened in the early 1990s about public auto insurance, because I was there. I remember meeting with the caucus and cabinet at Honey Harbour. The debate was intense and it was a very serious discussion.

I remember the pink collar workers, all the women who showed up out in front of the Legislature because of the difficult recession, telling us that if we went to public

auto insurance at that particular time they would lose their jobs. And we didn't want to do that. We didn't think it would have been the responsible thing to do at that time. However, it may be the responsible thing to do now.

I remember the champion of public auto insurance in our caucus, Mr Kormos, coming up to Sault Ste Marie in the early 1990s and speaking to a whole room full of brokers. I remember being nervous myself because I knew of the anxiety that was out there in the insurance industry around what we might do as government. I remember the member from Thorold coming up there and giving a passionate speech to that group and talking to them about public auto insurance, how it would be delivered and the benefits of that particular initiative, and him getting a standing ovation. Imagine, him getting a standing ovation from the auto insurance industry brokers in my community that evening. I've run into some of them since then, and they've said that they were disappointed when we didn't move with public auto insurance at that time, because they thought it would have been a better deal for them as well.

We're saying to them, and anybody out there tonight who is interested in public auto insurance that is affordable and accessible to all people, that they should be willing to sit down and talk to us as we move into debate, as this election is coming, about those things that affect the everyday lives of ordinary men, women and families across this province and that which we should be controlling in their interest, under the aegis of public power. Certainly public auto insurance is something that all of us need to get our head around and be willing to discuss in the next few weeks and months to come.

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): I am very pleased to have a few moments to speak in support of this resolution as well. It really is, in its own way, a fairly benign resolution that's simply asking the Ontario government to correct their failure to protect Ontario consumers. What I want to speak about today is just how angry my constituents are in northern Ontario—northwestern Ontario, specifically.

This issue began for me a couple of years ago in a very specific way, when I saw the impact that the increases were having on our northern economy, and specifically logging truck operators who, even though many of them had perfect driving records, were seeing their rates go up by 100%, 200%, 300%. What impact this had, in essence, was that they were being forced to park their rigs and no longer were able to do the job we're expecting them to do. The impact of that has been enormous.

In fact, I wrote to Minister Flaherty, when he was the Minister of Finance; Bob Runciman, when he was the Minister of Economic Development and Trade; and Norm Sterling, when he was the Minister of Consumer and Business Relations, saying, "You've got to do something about this." I think people are angry because the government has shown no particular interest or commitment to really get involved in this issue at all. In fact, I

got an answer back saying, "We think the rates that are being set are reasonable," which was pretty unacceptable.

The impact on the economy is enormous and is growing. What we've since then is that it's gone to all commercial vehicles. I spoke last week about a gentleman who owns a towing truck business and how his rates have almost quadrupled and the impact that's going to have. People are coming up to me in the street and I'm being told that their insurance is being cancelled. Certainly for people in the north, where we need to drive our vehicles, the increases and the impact it's having on their children who will be coming to drive very, very soon are enormous.

The fact is that we have so many examples of the impact this is having. And then you add to that the retro-active charges on our Union Gas bills, you add the increases to the hydro bills, you look at all that and people are justifiably, absolutely fed up with the fact that this government is not out to protect them and is not even out to do anything about it.

We know about the legislation that was passed almost six months ago; we're still waiting for the regulations to be passed. That may not have a huge impact on reduction in rates, but it perhaps could bring some stability, and that's what we're looking for, and I think it's fair game for us to be asking for this.

1730

I've got example upon example that I can use. The most recent one I must tell you about. Aside from those people who are just calling me on a daily basis about their auto insurance, the impact it is having on the economy is what concerns me in a very profound way, and I think it should. I got a call from Gary Kozak, who owns the Hodder Tavern, right across from the Strathcona Golf Course; it's a great place, great history. They employ 13 people. His rates have gone up; no claims whatsoever. His rates went up 25% last year—and he allowed me to tell you this, so I'm going to—to \$12,500 a year. This year they're going up another 65% to \$20,000 a year. The impact is quite simple in his case. It means he is going to have to lay off people. That is what's happening. If the government can't be concerned about that, I don't know what they can be concerned about. The fact is it's 13 employees, one business; some are being laid off. So there's no question that the government needs to protect the consumers, needs to play some significant role.

I heard the former minister talk about the difficulties in doing all these things. I'll tell you, even when the insurance companies come forward and explain that they're paying out more than they're receiving in premiums—I certainly haven't had an opportunity to look at the books, but I can tell you that most people are concerned that indeed some of the decisions they've made in terms of the stock market have had an impact on their decisions, and I am not one to argue that case. All I can tell you is that people are angry. They are coming to me and they are saying to me, as their member, that they expect the government of the day to support them and to protect

them. When I'm hearing the stories that I'm hearing in my large riding of Thunder Bay-Superior North—because I can tell you, in every single business the rates are going up enormously, and we have got a struggle. We've got an enormous crisis right now going on in our forest products industry as a result of the softwood lumber tariffs, the rising dollar, the lack of action by the provincial government. We've lost about 2,000 people from that industry.

If we're looking at what the government should be doing, we know we need some stability, we need some action taken. We cannot just sit back and allow people to continue to be gouged or attacked and to not be protected by the government of the day. So I would ask the members on the other side of the House to look at this resolution, a quite benign resolution, and support it, and find some way to correct it so that we can protect Ontario consumers against these skyrocketing rates. Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, for the chance to say a few words.

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): I just want to echo the passion that our colleague from Thunder Bay had on behalf of the small business people and the consumers who have to have insurance. It's not a choice. If you want to run a business, you need that liability insurance. Auto insurance is not a choice; it's a necessity. It's so apparent that people feel there's nobody looking after their interests. They know that the government of Ontario has a job to do, and that is to ensure that their interests are protected. They frankly feel that they've been forgotten and neglected in their time of need.

The need is of paramount importance because it's hitting seniors and people on fixed incomes who are seeing their auto insurance rates double. In my own riding there is a couple who have run an appliance store for 20 years without a claim, yet all of a sudden their latest bill shows a 30% increase in their liability insurance. Over the years, they've been reluctant to even file any claim. They feel that they're not being justly treated. Frankly, they don't know who to blame. They're asking if it's the insurance companies, if it's the broker. There is a heck of a lot of uncertainty and anxiety out there.

I think the government could better spend its money perhaps explaining to people what is happening out there and what the protections are rather than, every time you turn on the television there is a self-promoting ad by Premier Eves or one of his commercials about how great things are in Ontario. Why not try to explain what's happening to people's insurance? We haven't heard anything from Premier Eves about this catastrophe in insurance; never once. I don't think he's mentioned the word since he's been Premier for the last year. I wonder if the Premier has ever looked at his insurance premium and what he pays.

It's not only cars. People who are trying to close a deal on their homes have been told, "Well, we're not going to insure you because your wiring is outdated. You're going to have to spend \$10,000 to update your wiring or the deal won't close." This has never happened. For years

people were given a grace period and things were done. Or they're told, "We're not going to insure you because the fact is that you live in a certain part of the city or you're in a certain category." People are very, very upset and confused because they're not certain what's happening. All they know is that when they get their bills from their insurance companies, they are, for car insurance, 19% or 20% higher.

A senior citizen in my riding on Roselawn Avenue, Mr McKeagan, has driven without an accident for 30 years. All of a sudden his car insurance has doubled. He says to me, "I've had no accident. Why has it doubled? Would you please let the government know that something is very rotten in the insurance business?" I don't really think it's the fault of the insurance companies. I think it's the fault of government, which is not doing its job. As my colleague from Kingston and the Islands said, there's a lot of regulatory power. This government in fact passed a bill eight months ago. Eight months ago it passed a piece of legislation that they wouldn't allow to go to public hearings to have people speak on insurance, and they've done nothing for eight months. Then they wonder why people are frustrated and angry.

I would say, call Mr Eves and ask him what he's doing to protect ordinary Ontarians about their car, home or business insurance. Why doesn't he care? Where is he on insurance? Why is he so silent? Tell him to stop wasting money on those expensive television ads that we're paying for out of tax dollars. Tell us, Mr Eves, why aren't you interested in protecting people when they're trying to get basic insurance?

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain): I'm pleased to join in this debate because I, like my colleagues, am receiving many phone calls. Either people can't afford their insurance or, worse, can't get insurance. That has become the real problem in businesses as well.

Earlier in the day I brought a case that I want to bring again—I have a little more time now—because there are many issues within this case. This is just one example: Linda and Rick, who have been driving for 31 years, have never had an accident; they have a clear driving record. Their son Scott has been driving for less than five years. They were paying, as a family, \$1,472 a year. It has now increased to \$4,525. Why is this? When Linda came in, she actually had a flow chart just so she could understand all of the ins and outs. Scott had a minor at-fault accident in a parking lot, so the son had a minor accident, and Linda had a moderate at-fault accident. Their insurance was cancelled. Remember: two drivers, 31 years, clean record.

Here's another issue. The first-accident forgiveness policy cannot be applied to Scott because he's been driving for less than five years. Even though that was the first accident in the family and your first accident is supposed to be forgiven, he can't take advantage of that because the clause says that under five years, you can't. But it can't be transferred to the mother either. So what little they had to hang on to, they've lost. There's the Catch-22 that has to be addressed. Other insurance com-

panies won't take them as a result. They went to a company; they had to. Their work depends on their driving as a family. So their rate is now three times more than the original rate. The father, Rick, has never had an accident, ever, ever, ever, and he is punished as well with paying increased insurance.

I'm really proud to stand here with my colleague from Toronto Centre-Rosedale in demanding that this government protect Ontario consumers. Basically, we have a responsibility as a government to quickly put these regulations through. I don't know what you've been waiting for all these months. You brought a bill through. You promised regulations. Where are they? That is our responsibility.

1740

Another issue I want to touch on is the 500% increase in the medical rehab costs since 1991—that was mentioned across the way as well—from \$308 million to \$1.5 billion. Of course, these are the rehabilitation costs. We have to look closely at this. Difficult decisions need to be made, but we have no choice. If constituents like Linda, Rick and Scott will continue to have insurance—can continue to have insurance—it means that we have to take a serious look at the increased rehabilitations.

Before I was elected, I was working as a psychologist. I can tell you that there are set costs, or set figures, that we charge, that the Ontario Psychological Association recommends that we charge for assessments. We have to look at how much above or below—but I believe they're way above what is actually being recommended by the Financial Services Commission of Ontario. We have to examine that. We must always have the best needs of the client first and foremost. There's no question about that.

We also have to look at the whole, the needs of all of the citizens; that is, the need to have insurance, the need to have home insurance, the need to have business insurance, the need to have car insurance. We have to balance those out, which means a careful examination of the dramatic increase in the cost of rehabilitation.

I can say that, except for perhaps the hydro issue and a little bit of Union Gas, this is now the issue that my office in Hamilton Mountain is getting most of the calls on. It is affecting people's lives. It is affecting their work. I have many businesses in my riding that are basically going to close down because of this. In the fall it was hydro, and now it's this. Every time they turn around, my constituents and the constituents of Ontario have another obstacle thrown at them. The obstacles are basically just to survive, just to live, just to be able to make money to put food on the table for their kids. They're not asking for a lot.

It's interesting. One constituent who came and spoke to me about a number of issues, insurance being one of them, said, "At times I feel I just want to be left alone. Just leave me alone. I'm doing OK, and then here's another obstacle thrown at me. Leave my hydro bills alone, leave me insurance alone. I'm not asking much from you, just leave me alone." I think when we get to that point, we have to make some tough decisions,

examine the increased costs and rethink our insurance policies.

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): I want to start by thanking my colleague from Toronto Centre-Rosedale, George Smitherman, for taking the lead on this and bringing this to our attention to ensure that this gets done. Something needs to get done.

Ray Hauley, a constituent of mine, is the owner-operator of Rig Guard Oversize Load Specialists in Brantford. He's also the chairman of the insurance review committee for the southern Ontario Pilot Car Association and a member of the American Professional Pilot Car Association. Pilot cars are those wonderful cars that are strewn with those lights that escort those large loads on our highway from big industry, moving our industry from one place to another.

Guess what happened? There are 100 of those in Ontario right now. Four are in my riding alone. The industry is regulated to death. This is the most safe, regulated industry on our highways, bar none. They have the safest record. Guess what they can't get? They can't get insurance. Since September 11, their rates have gone from an average of \$3,000 to \$5,000 annually to \$9,000 to \$14,000 annually, and some of them can't even operate any more because their expenses have gone right through the ceiling.

Mr Hauley surveyed 200 pilot car operators in Canada and the United States, and only one of 200 ever made a claim. Only one out of 200 ever made a claim, and there was not one charged with any violations, and yet we can't get insurance for these. He called three insurance companies with 25 different insurance brokers and none of them are insuring these operators. They've refused.

I've got to tell you that something's wrong when you've got the safest drivers on the highway, bar none, and they can't get insurance. I can't accept it. They've got to do something about this.

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): Consumer revolt finds its way into provincial legislatures and has, particularly over the last eight years, when government has failed to manage a problem. This was the gang, the Harris-Eves government, that boasted they would come and fix government. The people who supported them expected them not only to address the particular crises of the day, but expected they would somehow manage government in a way that we didn't go from crisis to crisis.

That, of course, has not happened here: we would not be talking about this issue today and we would not have consumers calling up our offices—government offices as well—and crying foul, so that we desperately need to stabilize auto insurance premiums in Ontario, so that we desperately need to improve access to medical and rehabilitation services, so that we need to improve access to auto insurance coverage through a more competitive marketplace. If in fact the industry is put in a position of financial—if it's under water, and we know from what we've heard that this is an industry that is in trouble, then consumers can end up picking up the tab; the taxpayers can end up picking up the tab. Governments are brought

in to fix the crisis, and it's all because this government fell asleep at the switch when it came to protecting consumers with respect to auto insurance.

We know this is a government that promised a review of their much-lauded Bill 59 every two years and nothing happened. We know this government has been told and has been given opportunities on an ongoing basis, to revisit those things that needed fixing. They promised they'd fix them, but they didn't. They promised that they would manage this industry and that they would look after consumers, and they didn't. Promises made, but promises not kept.

What we are here talking about today are very straightforward principles and beginnings to deal with an extraordinarily complicated issue that cannot possibly be resolved through overly simplistic tort reforms, cannot possibly be resolved through some overly simplistic—what do you want to do?—purchase of the entire industry. I have great concerns with the entire oversimplification I heard from the member for Niagara because he thinks there could be a sound-bite solution. There are no sound-bite solutions here. It is instead the stabilization of auto insurance premiums. We need to improve access to coverage and to medical rehabilitative services. This has got to be the goal.

Let's be clear. Right now, the regulations read like the Income Tax Act. Right now, it has got to the point where there are instances of runaway costs. Yet, at the same time it is not as if the consumer, more often than not, is being served. It is not as if the industry is in a position where it is thriving and there is competition that might lead to greater consumer protection and greater consumer access. On every level there is a crisis, and a crisis coming. We can't wait, I say to the government of Ontario, until the crisis arrives and the industry is drowned and consumers are left with the tab.

It is time to start with a reliable, affordable approach to this issue and we've heard it here today. I thank the member for Toronto Centre-Rosedale for bringing this matter to the House.

The Deputy Speaker: The time for debate has ended. Mr Smitherman has moved opposition day number 3.

Is the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1749 to 1759.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour of Mr smitherman's motion will please stand up one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Agostino, Dominic
Bartolucci, Rick
Bisson, Gilles
Bountrogianni, Marie
Bradley, James J.
Brown, Michael A.
Bryant, Michael
Caplan, David
Churley, Marilyn
Colle, Mike
Conway, Sean G.
Cordiano, Joseph

Crozier, Bruce
Curling, Alvin
Di Cocco, Caroline
Duncan, Dwight
Gerretsen, John
Gravelle, Michael
Hoy, Pat
Kennedy, Gerard
Kormos, Peter
Levac, David
Martel, Shelley
Martin, Tony

McGuinty, Dalton
McMeekin, Ted
Patten, Richard
Peters, Steve
Phillips, Gerry
Prue, Michael
Pupatello, Sandra
Ramsay, David
Ruprecht, Tony
Sergio, Mario
Smitherman, George
Sorbara, Greg

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arnott, Ted
Baird, John R.
Barrett, Toby
Beaubien, Marcel
Chudleigh, Ted
Clark, Brad
Clement, Tony
Coburn, Brian
Cunningham, Dianne
DeFaria, Carl
Ecker, Janet
Elliott, Brenda
Flaherty, Jim
Galt, Doug
Gilchrist, Steve
Gill, Raminder
Guzzo, Garry J.

Hardeman, Ernie
Hastings, John
Hudak, Tim
Jackson, Cameron
Johns, Helen
Kells, Morley
Klees, Frank
Marland, Margaret
Martiniuk, Gerry
Maves, Bart
Mazzilli, Frank
McDonald, AL
Miller, Norm
Molinari, Tina R.
Munro, Julia
Murdoch, Bill
Mushinski, Marilyn

Newman, Dan
O'Toole, John
Ouellette, Jerry J.
Runciman, Robert W.
Sampson, Rob
Spina, Joseph
Sterling, Norman W.
Stewart, R. Gary
Stockwell, Chris
Tascona, Joseph N.
Tsubouchi, David H.
Turnbull, David
Wettlaufer, Wayne
Wilson, Jim
Witmer, Elizabeth
Wood, Bob
Young, David

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 36; the nays are 51.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

It being about two minutes after 6, this House stands adjourned until 10 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1802.

ERRATUM

No.	Page	Column	Line(s)	Should read:
18B	804	1	11	above the beach and he was there, just in case the Luft-

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon / L'hon James K. Bartleman

Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Gary Carr

Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers

Deputy Clerk / Sous-greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks at the Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Algoma-Manitoulin	Brown, Michael A. (L)	Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant	Barrett, Toby (PC)
Ancaster-Dundas-	McMeekin, Ted (L)	Haliburton-Victoria-Brock	Hodgson, Chris (PC)
Flamborough-Aldershot		Halton	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)
Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford	Tascona, Joseph N. (PC)	Hamilton East / -Est	Agostino, Dominic (L)
Beaches-East York	Prue, Michael (ND)	Hamilton Mountain	Bountrogianni, Marie (L)
Bramalea-Gore-Malton-	Gill, Raminder (PC)	Hamilton West / -Ouest	Christopherson, David (ND)
Springdale		Hastings-Frontenac-	Dombrowsky, Leona (L)
Brampton Centre / -Centre	Spina, Joseph (PC)	Lennox and Addington	
Brampton West-Mississauga /	Clement, Hon / L'hon Tony (PC)	Huron-Bruce	Johns, Hon / L'hon Helen (PC)
Brampton-Ouest-Mississauga	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée		Minister of Agriculture and Food / ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation
Brant	Levac, Dave (L)	Kenora-Rainy River	Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)		Gerretsen, John (L)
Burlington	Jackson, Cameron (PC)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Kitchener Centre / -Centre	Wettlaufer, Wayne (PC)
Chatham-Kent Essex	Hoy, Pat (L)	Kitchener-Waterloo	Witmer, Hon / L'hon Elizabeth (PC)
Davenport	Ruprecht, Tony (L)		Deputy Premier, Minister of Education / vice-première ministre, ministre de l'Éducation
Don Valley East / -Est	Caplan, David (L)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	Beaubien, Marcel (PC)
Don Valley West / -Ouest	Turnbull, Hon / L'hon David (PC)	Lanark-Carleton	Sterling, Hon / L'hon Norman W. (PC)
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Eglinton-Lawrence	Peters, Steve (L)		Wood, Bob (PC)
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Essex	Crozier, Bruce (L)	Markham	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Culture / président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement, ministre de la Culture
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Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Kells, Morley (PC)		
Glengarry-Prescott-Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)		
Guelph-Wellington	Elliott, Hon / L'hon Brenda (PC)		
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Mississauga South / -Sud	Marland, Margaret (PC)	Scarborough East / -Est	Gilchrist, Steve (PC)
Nepean-Carleton	Baird, Hon / L'hon John R. (PC) Minister of Energy, Minister responsable for francophone affairs, deputy House leader / ministre de l'Énergie, ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones, leader parlementaire adjoint	Scarborough Southwest / -Sud-Ouest	Newman, Hon / L'hon Dan (PC) Associate Minister of Health and Long- Term Care / ministre associé de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Niagara Centre / -Centre	Kormos, Peter (ND)	Scarborough-Agincourt	Phillips, Gerry (L)
Niagara Falls	Maves, Bart (PC)	Scarborough-Rouge River	Curling, Alvin (L)
Nickel Belt	Martel, Shelley (ND)	Simcoe North / -Nord	Dunlop, Garfield (PC)
Nipissing	McDonald, AL (PC)	Simcoe-Grey	Wilson, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Northumberland	Galt, Hon / L'hon Doug (PC) Minister without Portfolio, chief government whip / ministre sans portefeuille, whip en chef du gouvernement	St Catharines	Bradley, James J. (L)
Oak Ridges	Klees, Hon / L'hon Frank (PC) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports	St Paul's	Bryant, Michael (L)
Oakville	Carr, Hon / L'hon Gary (PC) Speaker / Président	Stoney Creek	Clark, Hon / L'hon Brad (PC) Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail
Oshawa	Ouellette, Hon / L'hon Jerry J. (PC) Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles	Stormont-Dundas- Charlottenburgh	Cleary, John C. (L)
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Ottawa-Orléans	Coburn, Hon / L'hon Brian (PC) Minister of Tourism and Recreation / ministre du Tourisme et des Loisirs	Thornhill	Molinari, Hon / L'hon Tina R. (PC) Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre associée des Affaires municipales et du Logement
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Sault Ste Marie	Martin, Tony (ND)	Windsor-St Clair	Duncan, Dwight (L)
		York Centre / -Centre	Kwinter, Monte (L)
		York North / -Nord	Munro, Julia (PC)
		York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston	Cordiano, Joseph (L)
		York West / -Ouest	Sergio, Mario (L)
		Mississauga West / -Ouest	Vacant

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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Fourth Session, 37th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Quatrième session, 37^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Thursday 5 June 2003

Jeudi 5 juin 2003

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 5 June 2003

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 5 juin 2003

*The House met at 1000.
Prayers.*

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): I move that, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should support the principle of greater accountability for politicians at the municipal level and consult with the Association of Municipalities, and municipalities, on how municipal politicians can be subject to the similar legislated requirements of public disclosure, accountability, and independent investigation with which all members of the Legislative Assembly and executive council currently comply.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Mr Christopherson has moved ballot item number 11, private member's notice of motion number 9. The member for Hamilton West has up to 10 minutes for his presentation.

Mr Christopherson: I appreciate the opportunity to address this issue.

Let me just say at the outset that I'm going to be pretty shocked, quite frankly, if this doesn't end up being motherhood. So my 10 minutes are going to be based on the fact that I expect this will be seen as such and that it would have the support of the House. I'll be very interested in any member who is going to stand in their place and suggest that, somehow, we ought not have any kind of accountability at all at the municipal level, which, quite frankly, is the way it is right now.

Again, to be very frank and upfront, the reason this is here, as many will know, is that I'm contemplating a return to the municipal world of politics. What I've found interesting, and shocking in many ways, was that having been here for 13 years, a number of those years as a member of the executive council in cabinet, I have, like every other member of this place, gone every year to meet with the Integrity Commissioner, formerly known as the Conflict of Interest Commissioner, to lay out—modest as it is—my entire financial situation: all your credit cards, all the money that you owe, any money you might have, any stocks, RRSPs, and also if you have guaranteed any loans. The whole purpose of that is so that it's easy for the public or another member of the

Legislature to quickly determine whether or not there has been a conflict of interest.

I can't count the number of times that I have seen matters referred to the Conflict of Interest Commissioner, now the Integrity Commissioner, and once that response comes back, that's the end of it. Whatever the answer is, whether further action needs to be taken or whether it's determined that there wasn't a conflict of interest, it is dealt with efficiently, quickly, and in a way that everyone considers all of the ethical matters to be dealt with and the whole thing to be transparent and honourable.

Yet when I think about a possible return to city council, I go from being a backbencher in the third party with about as little power as you can have in this place and having full disclosure of any kind of financial arrangement, entanglement, connection that I might have with anybody or anything in the world, to being possibly a member of a city council—in the case of Hamilton, an operating budget of over \$1 billion a year—where I don't have to disclose anything. Not one shred of my personal finances or my personal financial arrangements with anybody is registered anywhere. Here we go from being a backbencher in the third party with full disclosure every year for 13 years, to being on a council responsible for \$1 billion a year, and you don't have to tell anyone what any of your business is.

How does this affect the public? Right now, any member of the public or any member of this Legislature can contact the Integrity Commissioner and say, "I believe there's been a possible conflict of interest here. I'd like it looked into," and it is. That's really all you need to do. But under the Municipal Conflict of Interest Act—and there is one, but it's relatively toothless because it's all on the individual—if you, the public, have a concern about a member of council anywhere in Ontario, you have to go to a judge, and there are time limits to be met.

For the average person, going to a judge is a huge deal, not to mention the fact that there are costs involved, if nothing else, possibly time off work in order to follow up. You've got to make the entire case. That's an awful lot to ask of a member of the public who has reason to think there may be something untoward here that needs to be looked at. They're expected to go from concern about something all the way to the courts. It makes no sense whatsoever.

How did we get to this situation? I suspect the reason we haven't followed in lockstep—because the feds do the same thing; MPs have a similar process to what we have here—is that, going back 100 years, municipalities were not a large government in their own right. Their budgets

were usually fairly small. The matters involved were small. Everybody knew everybody, and it was pretty hard to pull something off unless the whole town or village was in on the deal.

But now the top five municipalities in Ontario have incredible populations and budgets that go with them: Toronto, 2.5 million people; Ottawa, 740,000 people; Mississauga, 600,000; my hometown of Hamilton, over 500,000 people; London, 330,000 people. Some of those cities are bigger than provinces, and the budgets that go with them.

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): Some countries.

Mr Christopherson: I just heard my friend say, "Some countries." That's true.

Municipal budgets—and these are round figures: the operating budget for the city of Toronto in 2002 was roughly \$6.2 billion. Backbencher, third party, Ontario Legislature: full financial disclosure, total and complete, and the ability to follow up with questions; a budget of \$6.2 billion, and not one member of that council, including the mayor, has to do anything at all, let alone anything close to what we do here.

1010

Ottawa: an operating budget of \$1.8 billion. That's a lot of money. Mississauga: well over \$1 billion. Hamilton: we just crossed over the line; we now have an operating budget of over \$1 billion. Toronto's budget is almost as big as the entire provincial budget of Alberta. Hamilton's budget is almost as big as that of Newfoundland and Labrador. Yet every single province in this country, including PEI, which has a population of, what, something under 150,000, has some process of an Integrity Commissioner type of office where you make those disclosures and then the public has the accessibility and the transparency as they have here in Ontario. And you would expect that. I think we'd all be shocked to find out that the province of Alberta or Newfoundland and Labrador, or any other province for that matter, would not have some type of Integrity Commissioner where we have to disclose our financial connections so that the public can be satisfied that everything is being done above-board. Yet we allow a situation to exist where those provinces that have a smaller population and a smaller budget, less money they're responsible for, less money they can give out than many of our major municipalities, have the Integrity Commissioner and the municipalities don't.

That's the core of this, Speaker, and that's why I'm not suggesting for a minute that it's anything radical or wild-eyed. I had looked at coming out with something a little more detailed, an actual bill that tied the municipalities to our Integrity Commissioner, but Linda Mitchell in my office placed a call to the commissioner's office and we found out, like most things, it's not that straightforward and their ability to handle that kind of workload was questionable.

So rather than get into the details of it, which quite frankly is also easy to knock down—you can find one part of the bill you don't like and you can vote against

it—in this case all I've done is make a very straightforward statement that I'm asking this House to adopt whereby we say that the government of Ontario, regardless of the political stripe, has an obligation to begin the process of contacting AMO, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, and other municipalities and municipal leaders, to begin the process of taking municipal expenses and finances and budgeting and bringing them into the same arena of light and transparency and accountability that we have here, that we in this House call on the government of the day to begin that process. Democracy calls for it; fairness calls for it. The public right to know the financial connections of their politicians is also at stake here, and I would urge my colleagues to send that strong message.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I'm pleased to indicate my support for the motion and say I think it's a good step forward.

The public hold politicians in relatively low esteem. We all look at the public opinion polls, and we're right down near the bottom in terms of the respect people have for various professions. You also see that the percentage of people who vote in each election is trending downward. It's true federally, it's true provincially, it's true municipally. There's the odd blip in it, but by and large it's trending downward, and it's because, I think, people increasingly are losing confidence in their democratic institutions. Every one of us has heard the comment, "All you politicians are dishonest." We tend to get brushed with the same stroke, so anything we can do that helps to restore the sense of confidence that the public have in politicians is a good step forward.

Mr Christopherson is right: each year, all the members of the Legislature are required to file with the Integrity Commissioner quite an extensive background on the various assets we have, and then we meet every year with the Integrity Commissioner, who has gone over our file, and answer questions. As Mr Christopherson said, we then, if there is an issue raised here in the Legislature about a conflict of interest about any of us, have a vehicle for doing that. So I think it's a good step to look at a similar mechanism for our municipalities and to seek the advice of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario.

I would say, however, that I think in many respects the Legislature is far more secretive and far less open than municipalities are, and there are many members of all parties whose background is municipal politics. You would never get away, municipally, with many of the things that we find happen here in the Legislature in terms of secrecy and lack of access and openness. I go back to the "budget presentation" that was made this year by the Premier; it wasn't even done here in the Legislature. The Legislature was supposed to have been sitting—the public should be aware. On December 12, we left the Legislature. We did not come back until May. The Legislature was supposed to sit in the month of March, but the Premier decided no, and he passed a resolution. He simply said, "We're not going to sit,"

because if we'd been sitting, we would have had the budget here. Then he presented the "budget" not here in the Legislature but at the Magna facilities, a private company.

As I say, I'm supportive of Mr Christopherson's motion. I think it will add in some ways to an increased sense of confidence by the public in municipal politicians, and so I will support it. But I would say to all of us that in many respects we're far worse than municipalities here in terms of openness and access and public scrutiny of what we do. Nothing could be more clear than the nerve to present the key document, the budget, not here in the Legislature but at Magna.

The even more shocking thing to me was, when the Speaker found the government in contempt of the Legislature by doing that, I was convinced that the government would say, "Mr Speaker, we appreciate your view on this, we accept your view on it, and we will commit from now forward to present the budget to the Legislature." But the government said, "No, we don't even agree with the Speaker. We'll do whatever we want. If we want to present the budget anywhere we want, at any time, we'll do it." They essentially just thumbed their nose at the Speaker and, more importantly, at the public.

As I say, Mr Christopherson's motion is a sensible one. It will make, I think, some difference in terms of public confidence in municipal politicians. But I would say that as he moves on to another career, we have in many respects far more to do here to correct our own House than the municipalities have to do.

Mr Rob Sampson (Mississauga Centre): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to, if I could, recognize the young boys and girls from Heritage Christian School from Jordan Station. Thanks for coming and watching today.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: It seems petty, but there were about 30 seconds off the clock between when he sat down and the point of order, and the clock kept running. I am just asking if you can put that back on.

The Acting Speaker: We're going to fix that. That will be restored.

The member for Niagara Centre.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): New Democrats, of course, enthusiastically support this resolution. Indeed, one would expect nothing less from Mr Christopherson. Think about it: Mr Christopherson, as a potential mayoralty candidate in the city of Hamilton, will be the only one of those mayoralty candidates about whom the public can determine, by virtue of simply coming to the Clerk's office here at Queen's Park, his assets, his liabilities, his holdings, his financial interests etc, because he has made that full declaration as a result of being a member of this Legislative Assembly.

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As well, I'm confident in suggesting that Mr Christopherson's authorship and presentation of this resolution today is indicative of his style not only here but when it comes to municipal politics. Mr Christopherson is calling

for public disclosure by municipal politicians, for greater accountability and the availability of independent investigation.

I want to indicate clearly, certainly to folks in Hamilton, that that is obviously what they can expect from Mr Christopherson as mayor of the city of Hamilton. That speaks well for the residents of Hamilton. The leadership inherent in this resolution should, I put to you, be emulated by municipal politicians in every other region and municipality in the province of Ontario.

It's been many years ago now, but I too served as a city councillor, in the city of Welland. While some members of council and mayors make voluntary disclosures, others are oh so reluctant to provide even the most modest of disclosures. That, I put to you, speaks volumes and should be cause for great concern.

What Mr Christopherson is proposing today is that there be a common standard across the province and that every municipal politician—mayor, councillor or reeve, whether it's big-city Ontario or small-town Ontario—should be subjected to the same standard. This isn't to be malicious. It isn't to discourage people from entering municipal politics. Indeed, it's to give members of the public—voters, taxpayers, residents of every municipality in this province—an opportunity to really know whom they're electing and, quite frankly, to assess the positions those councillors or mayors take in the context of what financial interests they may have and what financial interests they may be advancing by virtue of positions they take.

We have a new Municipal Act, which, once again, has conflict-of-interest provisions in it. Regrettably, I believe that many municipal politicians are overly cautious and have been intimidated into too-frequent declarations of conflict of interest. I also believe there are more than a few municipal politicians who hide behind a declaration of conflict of interest to avoid taking a position on contentious or sensitive issues.

The provision being promoted by Mr Christopherson will, quite frankly, help to clarify what indeed is a conflict of interest and help to assure those councillors who, as I say, feel somewhat intimidated by overly cautious advice or overly cautious positions they adopt. It will relieve them of that, because the public will know. There will be a full disclosure as to what financial interests that person has, and frankly financial interests that are related to intimate family members.

I suggest it would be delinquent of any member of this assembly not to support this resolution; indeed this resolution should be passed unanimously.

I also feel incredibly comforted that Mr Christopherson identifies this as part of his agenda in terms of his pursuit of the position of mayor of the city of Hamilton. I call upon other mayors and other municipal politicians to follow his example.

Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): I am pleased to rise this morning to support the resolution put forth by the member for Hamilton West. I think a measure of this kind is long overdue.

There are many who say that in many ways our municipal politicians are closer to the electorate than any level of government, and I have to agree with that. More importantly, some of the matters that municipal politicians deal with affect the everyday lives of many of our constituents, and they play an important function. I think this government has recognized that more responsibility should be given to our municipal representatives in that they play such a great role in the lives of Ontario citizens.

Commensurate with that, I think there is an obligation, however, to bring the standards of integrity up to the same level as MPPs. That's not to say that the vast majority do not act in the manner of MPPs. They do. I recognize them and I congratulate the members of my municipal councils in Cambridge, Kitchener and North Dumfries—all part of my riding—who work very hard on behalf of the people and do their very best. They are to be congratulated.

However, although they are presently covered by the Municipal Conflict of Interest Act, which requires them to disclose pecuniary interests in any matter before council and to abstain from voting or trying to influence the matter, that may not go far enough because it does not deal with their personal business, which we as MPPs must reveal to the Integrity Commissioner.

Municipalities are also subject to the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. I have to agree with some of the comments made that perhaps some municipal councillors seem to be or are perceived to be somewhat cautious in declaring a conflict of interest where perhaps none exists in actual legal fact. On the other hand, that is a healthy situation. They are concerned, not just with doing what is right but being perceived as doing what is right. I know all municipal councillors share that belief, and that is an important function.

However, Mr Christopherson's resolution, as mentioned, goes further than that and brings the level of disclosure of assets to the level of MPPs. I think that is an important step in our province. It's a step that I believe the vast majority if not all municipal councillors would welcome, because they are as concerned as us with the public perception of elected representatives in this province, and I think that is a most healthy situation.

Mr Agostino: I am pleased to rise in support of the resolution of my good friend and colleague Mr Christopherson from Hamilton West. I think it's timely, with the municipal elections coming. I am pleased to tell you that I am certainly very supportive—and will support Mr Christopherson's bid for mayor—along with my colleague Marie Bountrogianni from Hamilton Mountain, because we believe this resolution reflects the type of integrity we need to bring back at the city council level across this province.

I spent seven years on city council in Hamilton, a number of those with David. The role of municipalities and the role of city councils has changed dramatically over the years, and unfortunately the legislation has not kept up with that. Frankly, the accountability that should

be there is not there. It's important because it's not only the perception but also the reality of the situation where councils are dealing with some very, very major issues today, compared to, say, 20 or 30 years ago. A city council, with a zoning application, can literally take a useless piece of land and turn it into something worth tens of millions of dollars. The nature of the decisions that are made and the size of the budgets have changed dramatically.

1030

The conflict-of-interest legislation as it now exists has very little investigative power. Often, the first line in some municipal acts is a city clerk, who of course reports to those city councillors who are there. There is very little in legislation that prohibits councillors from doing business with the city, a significant amount of business. There is no mechanism for knowing which councillors own what companies that may do business with the city of Hamilton. It's simply left to the discretion of the individuals. In this age where the public expects transparency, where the public expects openness in government, our Municipal Act has unfortunately failed badly and has not kept up with that.

Let's understand: unlike us on the opposition side of the House—we don't have a lot of power to change or make laws here—city councillors, in a sense, are almost in a cabinet, like an executive council, because decisions are made collectively. They vote, they make a decision, and the balance of power is there, unlike in our system here, where we're held to a much higher standard, even on the opposition side of the House, than city councillors, who in a sense have many of the same powers that a cabinet minister would or the executive council of the province of Ontario would.

It's important to ensure we restore the faith. Politicians have taken a beating over the years, much of it deserved, some of it not deserved. Every step we can take to restore that trust, that public confidence, that sense in people that people don't get into politics for themselves or for their own personal gain but to help make a better community, a better place to live, a better province, any steps we can take to restore that faith in our political system I think will go a long way toward enhancing that. The act and the changes that have occurred over the years have not kept up.

Another area where I'd like to see some changes is in the powers, for example, of the mayor. We have a situation in the act today where the mayor has one vote, as every other councillor does. A mayor in the city of Hamilton, who may get 200,000 or 250,000 votes, has the same voting power as a councillor who will get elected with 3,000 or 4,000 votes in one particular ward. The situation in the city of Toronto is much greater than that.

As we look at this legislation, I think we need to also go beyond that and look at whether there is an opportunity to change the act to give the mayor some extra powers. In a sense, the mayor of a municipality has the mandate of all of the people, the basic representation of

all of the people in that municipality. I think that's important and I would like to see that changed, because I think it's often frustrating. You look to a mayor for leadership, and of course it's the power, the ability to bring people together, that clout of the office of mayor and your ability to work with council that allows you as mayor of a city to make changes and bring things forward. But frankly, when push comes to shove in the voting and the ability to get things done, unless you can convince a majority of your colleagues on any issue, anything from a stop sign to hiring a department head, you absolutely have no power, or very little clout. So I think it's important when we look at that to look at that evolution as well.

I think this piece of legislation is well worth it. It would be a great change if we bring it forward. I think it will help restore the sense of confidence in municipal councils. I congratulate Mr Christopherson for bringing this forward, and hopefully this will pass unanimously today.

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): I rise today as well in support of this resolution. I had, as the members of this House will know, the opportunity to serve on the new megacity of the city of Toronto for nearly four and a half years before resigning to come to this august place. I will tell you that in those initial years of a new and extremely large city there was a lot of discussion on how to preserve integrity. There was a lot of discussion on how to make sure financial transactions were above-board.

I was very proud to have served on the committee that recommended an auditor general for the city of Toronto to make sure that monies that were being expended on behalf of the people of that city were expended wisely. The city of Toronto made a good decision in going from a system that most municipalities in Ontario use, which is independent outside auditors, to one that was internal, and appointed one of their own to head it up.

I was less successful in my attempts to get an integrity commissioner for the city of Toronto. In fact, shortly after the time that I left, that entire idea was nixed.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): You should have stayed.

Mr Prue: No, I'm not sure it would have made any difference.

I do know that during that entire period, at the start of every council meeting there was a call for conflicts of interest, when the councillors and the mayor would stand up individually and recognize those things for which they believed they may have a conflict of interest. Sometimes they ranged from the silly and the bizarre—where people were claiming conflicts that were obviously not covered by the Municipal Act, in an attempt to get out of controversial issues, or simply to be able to get an afternoon off, if there was a long debate anticipated—to those that there were heartfelt and absolutely true.

But what always troubled me and troubled most of the members who were elected to the city of Toronto council was there were often times when we felt that there were

conflicts there but the members did not stand up. We did not have the authority to challenge them; we could not do so. Even the council itself could not challenge that someone had a conflict. That was left up to the courts and to another entire process that was devoid of and outside the council's responsibility.

As a result of some of what went on, we now witness the spectacle in the city of Toronto of the MFP inquiry. We can see the whole train of people who have been called before that inquiry and the sleazy underbelly of what happens when conflicts are not declared, when cozy little deals are being made. We have heard from Jeff Lyons about the \$150,000—although it's not clear whether it was for him or for someone else. We have heard from Tom Jacobek, who has admitted under oath that he lied, and then lied about the lies. We have heard about Dash Domi, who made a lot of money and clearly had no expertise in that type of salesman's job. We have heard, tragically, from the mayor of Toronto, Mr Mel Lastman, that he didn't know anything that was going on. He didn't know it from staff, politicians or lobbyists. He didn't even know it from Jeff Lyons, who had helped him manage and fundraise through all of his campaigns. We are about to hear in the next few weeks from Wanda Liczyk, the former treasurer of Toronto, who now works for OPG. I am sure that testimony is going to be very enlightening.

But sadly, last October, when debating the very issue that we have before us today—whether or not to have an integrity commissioner—the administration committee nixed the entire idea. They did not want an independent integrity commissioner. If any city in this province needs an integrity commissioner, I would suggest Toronto does, not because its politicians are bad but because of the overwhelming size of the city with a \$6.2-billion budget and the overwhelming size of city council, being 55 members, and the overwhelming impossibility for ordinary people to know personally their city of Toronto councillor. I represented 57,000 people at the city of Toronto during the last year and a half, and before that, I represented 115,000 people, who could not all personally know me or where a potential conflict might exist. One might find that in a small town with a reeve and a couple of councillors who all live in your village and you know them, their house and the car they drive. That is impossible in extremely large cities.

This leaves the citizenry with only one option, and that is the courts. It is not surprising that that option is hardly ever taken up. It is expensive, time-consuming, and the burden of proof is upon the accuser—the burden of proof when one has absolutely no facts by which to go. I would suggest that is why we are not seeing conflicts prosecuted.

This is a very simple resolution. I suggest that if all members agree, this is something that the province should do on behalf of the municipalities. We've seen a lot of downloading exercises; let's have an uploading exercise that actually works. Upload this responsibility to the Integrity Commissioner or to a part of his office for

municipalities. Upload it so that the citizens of this province, through their municipalities, can be assured that the politicians at the local level have the same guarantees or the same responsibilities that we in this House so gladly share with our Integrity Commissioner, so that everyone will know that we are honest and doing what needs to be done.

1040

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): It's a pleasure to join in the debate today to support Mr Christopherson's resolution. I'll just refresh the memories of the people out there as to what the resolution is. It is, "In the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should support the principle of greater accountability for politicians at the municipal level and consult with the Association of Municipalities, and municipalities, on how municipal politicians can be subject to the similar legislated requirements of public disclosure, accountability, and independent investigation with which all members of the Legislative Assembly and executive council currently comply."

I support that resolution. In my riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka, I believe I have more municipalities than probably any other riding in the province. I have 33 municipalities in the riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka. We have six moderate-sized municipalities in Muskoka, with Bracebridge, Huntsville, Lake of Bays, Muskoka Lakes, Georgian Bay township and Gravenhurst, as well as the district upper-tier government in Muskoka, and I have 26 municipalities in the Parry Sound district, as well as unorganized territories, which have local service boards that make local decisions—and from time to time there are conflicts. I know currently there are some conflicts between one of my local service boards and the fire department in the northern part of the riding.

I work on a regular basis with the mayors, the reeves, the councillors—in fact, hardly a day goes by that I'm not in contact with the various municipal politicians. In fact, this morning I just got off the phone with Ted Knight, the mayor of Parry Sound, making him aware of the various marketing programs that are available to municipalities for efforts to revitalize the community post-SARS, because Parry Sound recently was hit with some significant quarantines. About a sixth of the population, 1,000 people of the 6,000 in the town of Parry Sound, were recently in quarantine. I have certainly heard from the mayor and from businesses that they need to revitalize the community. So I was on the phone with the mayor, making him aware of the Ontario tourism marketing partnership programs available to help regenerate that community. Yesterday I was talking to Bill Core, from Perry township, to do with some local issues there. So hardly a day goes by that I'm not involved with the local politicians.

I would like to point out that those local politicians generally do a great job. They're there for the right reasons. They're motivated, because they're interested in doing the best they can for their communities. They certainly don't take on the responsibilities because of the

pay they receive, because it's, generally speaking, not a huge amount of money. But I think it is a good thing that there be more disclosure. In our case, as MPPs, we have to do an annual disclosure statement to the Integrity Commissioner of things like our assets and those of our family members—assets, bank accounts, investments—and it's available to the public as well. I think that's a good thing. It's more accountability; it keeps the whole process transparent and open. I think this sort of process, applied to municipal politicians, would not be onerous and it would be a positive step toward increasing accountability.

Mr Bradley: I am rising to speak in support of the resolution of Mr Christopherson, and I want to commend him for bringing it forward. It's very timely. Perhaps it has been timely for a number of years now, but we have just not seen the kind of legislation and framework that is necessary to ensure that the accountability and integrity at the local level is under the same scrutiny as it is here at the provincial level.

First of all, we start off by knowing that overwhelmingly our locally elected officials are honest people, people of integrity, people who have the best interests of their constituents in mind. Therefore, those individuals are not going to object to some kind of legislative framework that might emerge from this resolution.

Keep in mind that the member has not simply said that we in this House will impose upon municipalities some rules and regulations without any consultation. He has specifically said in his resolution that we are debating this morning that there shall be consultation with the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, which represents municipalities in this province, and also with municipalities themselves on perhaps an individual basis.

We have to recognize that anybody who has a chance to make decisions may make decisions which are to the benefit of themselves, or decisions which are to the benefit of friends or financial contributors. If information is provided to the public on where those contributions have been made, how much they were; if there is an opportunity to investigate when there is a problem and we have somebody comparable to an integrity commissioner for the municipalities in this province, that will be a great advantage.

We have seen in the news in the past year, for instance, a number of examples of people who have been under suspicion, to say the least. These may be related to contracts that are provided to municipalities; these may be related to developments which take place within the bounds of a municipality, or a decision that simply benefits one individual or one particular business group. So, to avoid that, the member has suggested, I think wisely, that we find a mechanism to avoid that happening at the municipal level, and if it does happen to have a mechanism to deal with it appropriately in terms of investigation and penalties that can be applied.

I think this is very important for the public. The public wants to know that its elected individuals are above-board, that their interests are on the table so people can

see them, and I know there is an opportunity now for municipal politicians at a council meeting to declare conflicts of interest. Some have mentioned that that has been done from time to time to avoid making a decision on a particular subject. I don't know how often that happens, but I think it's always better to err on the side of caution in these matters.

The member has clearly said: people at the provincial level must declare assets and so on on a confidential basis to a commissioner. If a member of this Legislature wishes to draw to the attention of the Integrity Commissioner something that he or she believes is worthy of investigation, that can be done at this level. Keep in mind that, as someone said to me the other day, it is much harder to buy an entire government or buy an entire caucus within a Legislature than it is an individual who might be representing them at the local level.

We hope that doesn't happen. This resolution will go a long way to reducing the risk of that happening. It's in line with the quest we all have for open government, for accountable government, for integrity at all levels of government, and I think it commends itself to support by all members of this Legislature. I hope from it will flow legislation which will meet the goals of the resolution.

1050

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I'm certainly pleased to join the debate with respect to the resolution. Having been a former councillor of the city of Barrie, I can tell you that there were municipal conflict-of-interest guidelines. When you're dealing with a matter that you could have a pecuniary interest in, indirectly or directly, there is an obligation obviously to declare a conflict of interest and not vote or debate or be a part of those discussions.

What the member from Hamilton is proposing here is to bring it up to a higher standard, to the standard that we have here in the Legislature, which is a very high standard of disclosure with respect to your own personal dealings, which I know is being hotly debated right now at the federal level. They're looking to bring in greater disclosure with respect to your financial portfolio. That's one of the things we have to file every year, in terms of our financial area and also the rules we face as different members.

I think the key word here is "integrity." That's what is important out there, in terms of: how do you bring integrity to the system? Well, obviously, the members have to have integrity. The system has to be designed to make accountability the main factor, so that you can avoid the scandals which are plaguing the city of Toronto right now with respect to the MFP inquiry and the fingerprinting that is there.

Integrity, in terms of the members being transparent in terms of their financial wherewithal, certainly would be a step forward with respect to keeping the members aware of what their role is. I think it's very important, because municipal government has an incredible impact, not only with respect to the development of the community but certainly for developers and business people who can

benefit by the decisions that are made at the municipal level. The power to rezone lands with respect to official plans is an enormous power with tremendous economic benefits for those who are the beneficiaries.

So I think the level of integrity that's being demanded of this Legislature certainly shouldn't be any less for municipalities, and I think that's where the member is headed. I think that would bring that transparency.

I think the public needs to know, with respect to a member, and to have that public disclosure in terms of where they stand. If you don't have a system that's in place—and I think the way it's set up right now with the municipal conflict of interest, it's really dealing with things that are coming on the floor and that are being debated and discussed, whereas I think you may have to go a little bit further with respect to bringing the members in line with respect to other matters and to bring home what it means to be in public office.

Integrity of the member is something that has to be drilled home to the members because, quite frankly, if you don't have a system in place where they have to disclose and be a part of the process, in terms of filling out forms or dealing with what they're accountable for, who knows whether the members even know if they're subject to the Municipal Conflict of Interest Act? That would probably be part of their briefing when they're brought in as new councillors, but I think it has to go another step further, and I think that's what the member is trying to get at here: going that extra step to make sure they understand, not only from a briefing but from a written form, what their responsibility is. They have an enormous amount of power, and they also have the respect of the community and their constituents who have elected them.

So I think the member is on the right track, and I would support that fully.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I'm pleased to support this resolution.

I heard my colleague say something, and I have to ask him the question. He said he was contemplating moving to municipal politics. I thought the decision was made. Does he mean to say that he's coming back? I just need him to answer that question; it's not a very serious one. I'm just joking.

A couple of things, really quickly: in my view, if there is anybody who has to have conflict-of-interest guidelines, it's probably more so at the municipal level. In this Legislature we all understand, and I think most people will understand, that the lower the level of government, the closer you are to the people. On a daily basis, the municipalities deal with developers and with people looking to get zoning changes and all kinds of things that are a daily occurrence. If you need transparency, you certainly need to have it at the municipal level.

That's not to say there's a whole bunch of crooked politicians at the municipal level. By and large, I think that most people who serve at the municipal level are honest, hard-working people who are trying to do the right job in serving their community, and those people

aren't paid very well for what they do. Most of them do it as a part-time, temporary job, for which they get paid a stipend of maybe 1,000 bucks a month, if they're lucky, and they put far more than \$1,000 worth of wages back in that job as municipal alderman, or councillor, depending on where you live.

I think the issue is that you need to give the public a sense of transparency. You have to give them some assurances, for example, that if a particular councillor or mayor is associated with a particular development group, that will be disclosed so that it's very clear that if that issue comes before committee of the whole or comes before municipal council or in a closed session, the councillor or mayor in that case would have to remove themselves from any of the influence they may bring toward giving that particular company any kind of additional favour because they happen to be associated with them as a director or may have received some kind of gift from them or whatever.

I think that's not onerous. It's already something we do here at the provincial level. I've got to disclose, as all members of the Legislature do, if I've received any kind of gift—what's the limit? I think it's \$50 or \$100. If you get a pen that's worth \$50—I forget what the limit is; it's either \$50 or \$100, something like that. It's not a lot. But the point is, if anybody gives you, as a member of the assembly, any kind of gift—I think it's in excess of \$100—you've got to report that to the commissioner, and rightfully so. Suppose someone decided to give me a trip for \$500 or \$1,000.

Feedback from sound system.

Mr Agostino: It's a foghorn.

Mr Bisson: It's a foghorn, exactly. I've got one on my airplane in case there's fog. That really threw me off for the last couple of seconds.

Interjection: It's like The Gong Show.

Mr Bisson: I'm about to get the hook. Anyway, I just want to say that all of us here in the assembly clearly have to work under those guidelines. Why? Because we need to give the public the assurance that we're not giving any kind of favour to a particular company because we may be associated with them or had a gift. When those things happen, you have to have the commissioner of conflict of interest come in and give judgment as to whether the member has or hasn't broken the rules.

I think applying those rules at the municipal level wouldn't be seen by municipalities as a hostile act. I agree with Mr Christopherson that we shouldn't be trying to impose something without first consulting with municipalities and AMO, and that's what his resolution calls for.

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre): I want to commend the member for Hamilton West for bringing this resolution forward. My knowledge of the member over the past eight years and my experience with him has always indicated that he is a man who is highly principled, a man of integrity, and I don't question any motive whatever that he may have in bringing this forward, as some in this place may.

I want to say that all municipal politicians are already subject to the Municipal Conflict of Interest Act, which requires those members of municipal council to disclose any pecuniary interest in any matter before council.

However, in the 2003 budget our government indicated that the government will work with municipalities to enrich accountability for public investment and public services. The member opposite will of course be aware that in our party platform for the upcoming election campaign there is a pledge that increases to municipal taxes would have to be approved by the taxpayers in a referendum. That falls in line, essentially, with what the member for Hamilton West is trying to do as well. There are going to be municipal stakeholders who will complain, but I think you're going to have a fair amount of support among municipal stakeholders as well. I think you will have both complaints and opposition from municipal councillors and municipal mayors, but I think that what this does is set a higher standard for all municipal politicians, and of course we all know that all politics are local. Why should municipal politicians be held to any lower standard than what we in this place are?

The Acting Speaker: Response?

Mr Christopherson: Let me thank all colleagues from all three parties for your comments. Particularly on the last point, I appreciate that it's not seen as something other than exactly what it is. I appreciate that you give me the benefit of the doubt on that. Thank you.

1100

There are a few things on which I'll just take a moment; I don't have a lot of time. The member for Scarborough-Agincourt talked about how he was supporting this and the lack of secrecy in this place. It gives me the opportunity to again point out that we have a structured opposition, with an official opposition, a loyal opposition whose role is to go after the government and hold them accountable, still loyal to our system and our Constitution. But their job is to hold people accountable. You don't have that kind of dynamic on city council, at least it's not structured. It often exists on a personal basis, but it's not a structural part of it.

My friends from Niagara Centre and Cambridge both spoke to the fact that there are occasions when people are being overly cautious. I think that speaks well to councillors who are making declarations, but it removes far too many councillors from debates they otherwise should or could be involved in, and as my friend from Beaches-East York mentioned, there are some people—I think his words were “silly” and “bizarre”—who have silly and bizarre reasons for doing things. Perhaps they just want to stay out of a controversial issue and that's a nice, neat way to do it. This makes the whole thing very straightforward.

My friend from Hamilton East and a couple of others talked about this zoning issue, and that is so crucial. A piece of land worth virtually nothing can be made to be worth millions with one vote.

Lastly, my friend from St Catharines was good enough to mention that we consider almost all municipal politicians to be members of high integrity. This is merely added protection for democracy. I thank all members and hope they will support this resolution.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. This completes the time allocated for discussing ballot item number 11. I will take the vote on this item at 12 o'clock noon.

TRUTH ABOUT IPPERWASH ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 CONCERNANT LA VÉRITÉ SUR IPPERWASH

Mr Phillips moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 46, An Act to provide for a public inquiry to discover the truth about events at Ipperwash Provincial Park leading to the death of Dudley George / Projet de loi 46, Loi prévoyant une enquête publique pour découvrir la vérité sur les événements qui se sont produits au parc provincial Ipperwash et qui ont conduit au décès de Dudley George.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): The member for Scarborough-Agincourt has up to 10 minutes for his presentation.

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I'm seeking support for my bill, which calls for a public inquiry. Just to remind the public of this event, it took place in September 1995, shortly after the new government came in. The First Nations took over Ipperwash Provincial Park after the park closed on Labour Day. The OPP had known about the plans for this for at least a month. Two days later, Dudley George was killed in a confrontation with the OPP. It's the first time a First Nations person has died in a land claim dispute in at least 100 years.

The reasons for the need for a public inquiry are twofold. There is, I think, very strong evidence of inappropriate political involvement in the police operations at Ipperwash Provincial Park at the very highest level, and I'm referring to the then Premier of the day.

The evidence of that has been gathered over eight years. Firstly, notes from meetings held on the actual day of the shooting show this: "The Premier's office wants removal now." Then you see an arrow pointing the other way: "OPP removal later." So it's this conflict between the Premier's office and the OPP. The OPP did not want removal now; the Premier's office did. The OPP are reluctant, since it appears to be a land dispute. The issue is political direction of the OPP.

That's the first piece of evidence of inappropriate involvement.

After seven years of pushing for this, the Premier finally acknowledged that the day of the shooting he held a meeting with three cabinet ministers and two senior OPP officers. As I say, for a long while he said he had no involvement in it. At that meeting, there is a note that says, "Attorney General instructed by Premier that he

desires removal within 24 hours," more evidence of what I regard as totally inappropriate involvement in this operation.

We have transcripts of the two commanding police officers after they heard this, saying, "That's not what we want. We want more time." The local member of the Legislature, a Conservative member I might add, was at the police command post at least four times before the shooting death. Four hours before the shooting, he was at the command post and said, "If police services can't do it, get someone who can. I don't mind taking the controversy."

We have here the typed notes from the police, and we had those notes probably three or four years ago. We then found the handwritten notes that provided the basis for the typed notes. We found six references to the Premier in the handwritten notes that were omitted from the typed notes.

Among things the Premier is saying in the handwritten notes: "We're on the right track." The typed note omits the Premier from those notes. In another handwritten note: "The Premier is in constant touch, good communications." The typed note says, "John Carson advised that he was keeping in contact with the Kettle Point to get their feeling." No mention of the Premier.

It's extremely unusual that somehow or other the difference between the handwritten police notes and the typed notes excluded about six political references.

On occasion, the government has said that the police in a sworn affidavit said they took no direction from the government. That is not the case. In the sworn testimony of then-Commissioner O'Grady, a well-regarded individual, I might add, in his sworn affidavit, he's very careful of this when he says that he took no "command direction" from the government and that he was never ordered to remove them by force. But he's never, in a sworn affidavit, said he did not take direction from the government.

So that's the first issue that must be determined. I say to all of us, when the Premier of the province of Ontario, and I think the evidence is strong, is inappropriately involved in a police action, it demands a public inquiry.

The second reason it demands a public inquiry is, why did the province abandon a long-standing approach to dealing with this that had existed for decades? We have evidence here that there was no policy in place at the time of the shooting death. In fact, in this note, called "Actions To Be Taken," it says, "We must establish an aboriginal policy framework by October 2, 1995." They did not have a policy. They scrapped the existing policy, put nothing in place and then they said, "We must develop one by October 2, 1995," after the shooting death. It says, "NB: the fact the government is working on an ABF"—aboriginal policy framework—"will not be part of any messaging." In other words, "Don't tell anyone we don't have a policy."

Why did the government decide to abandon that long-standing tradition? Well, the available evidence said the Premier's executive assistant said, "The Premier is

hawkish on this issue. It will set tone on how we deal with these issues over the next four years. It feels we're being tested on this issue. The Premier's office doesn't want to be seen working with Indians at all." The police, on the other hand, said, "It's imprudent to rush in."

The First Nations took over that park to protect a burial ground. At the time, we were told there was no burial ground, and then we found out that right here at Queen's Park the government had in its possession evidence of a burial ground. In fact, during construction of the park it was the government's own employee building the park who said, "Listen, we found a burial ground. This should be protected." It was the government's own document, and once it was made clear that the government had that document, it had to go to court and drop all the charges against the First Nations, because they had this defence called colour of right evidence of a burial ground.

1110

So all of us now are going to be part of the decision: do we or do we not call for a public inquiry? The government said, "We'll wait until the civil case is over before we make that decision." I'll make several points about the civil case.

The George family never wanted to launch a civil case. The only reason they did was because year after year the government refused to even commit to holding a public inquiry. They never wanted the public inquiry.

Any lawyer, outside of the government's lawyer, will tell you that the civil approach is not the right approach. Can you imagine the reaction of the people of Walkerton if we had ever said, "If you want to find out what happened at Walkerton, launch a civil case. Sue us. We're not going to hold a public inquiry." It's the same thing here.

Dudley George's brother, Sam George, is here. He has been subjected to the worst kinds of government abuse: \$3 million of taxpayer money attacking him, calling him a terrorist. It's shameful. It is truly shameful. The former Premier has spent well over \$1 million himself fighting Sam George in a battle that he should never, ever have to fight. The only reason he's doing it is because the government will not commit to holding a public inquiry.

The George family is a family of very modest means, and up against it is the entire state apparatus: \$3 million, and there will be a three-month civil case where another \$2 million will be used to attack him. It's wrong.

The evidence is overwhelming. There is a need for a public inquiry. The only reason the civil case was ever started was because the George family always suspected that Premier Harris, and now Premier Eves, would never call a public inquiry.

It is a shameful piece of Ontario's history that we have a chance to begin to erase today. I would hope the members would study the material I sent them, would agree that we need to end this sorry chapter and begin a public inquiry now.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Frank Mazzilli (London-Fanshawe): It's certainly a pleasure to rise on behalf of my colleagues and

the government. The member for Scarborough-Agincourt speaks about this matter in a very passionate way. But certainly this matter is before the courts. I would say, on behalf of the government, that we would not be participating in this debate.

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): I just can't believe that the government of Ontario would not participate in this debate. First the government said the public inquiry couldn't happen. They said, "It can't happen because there are criminal and civil matters underway." Then the criminal matter was finished and the government said, "We can't debate this in this House because the civil matter is underway," and the government knew that was wrong. They would have gotten advice from the Attorney General, they would have gotten advice from Cabinet Office that there is absolutely no obstacle to a public inquiry in circumstances where a civil proceeding is underway. They know that.

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): Walkerton.

Mr Bryant: Walkerton happened at the same time that civil proceedings were underway. We know that. We consulted, and the Legislature consulted, with Professor Patrick Macklem at the University of Toronto faculty of law. He's an expert on this. I've read this in the House, but I'll read it again. Here's what he said, and why he said we need to have a public inquiry and why a civil proceeding is inappropriate:

"Public inquiries are often able to investigate, inform, and educate in ways superior to those available to the judicial and legislative branches of government. The judicial process, according to the Ontario Law Reform Commission, tends to assign blame by 'fragmenting issues into a limited set of categories established by existing norms,' whereas a public inquiry enables a broader examination of social causes and conditions."

He says, and this is important, "Public inquiries often perform an important social function, contributing to 'a dramatic transformation in popular perceptions of some previously poorly illuminated aspects of Canadian society and institutions.'"

That is exactly what is happening here, thanks to some extremely courageous Ontarians, one of whom is the member who just spoke, Mr Gerry Phillips. Thanks to a number of extremely courageous Ontarians, this sorry chapter in Ontario's history continues to be a black eye on the province of Ontario, and the only way to get to the truth here is to have a public inquiry.

All the defences the government has thrown up and all the money the government has spent to avoid a public inquiry just leave Ontarians more and more suspicious that something dreadful, something that violates everything we believe about the way governments ought to operate, something that violates the very principle of the separation between the crown, the government, the executive council, on one hand, and those who must perform police duties and those who must prosecute, on the other hand—something happened and somebody died, and we must get to the bottom of it.

Yet, the government comes up with excuse after excuse and spends taxpayer dollars down the drain, and

now, in the last flagrant violation of their duties, they won't even debate it in the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. I can't believe it. I can't believe that they do not have the guts to stand in their place and defend their position. I can't believe that they would exercise such extraordinary arrogance and fail to stand up for the government of the day and defend its decision.

It is atrocious that the parliamentary assistant to the Attorney General will not even take the time to rise in his place and explain why on earth the government of Ontario is obstructing justice in getting to the bottom of Ipperwash—it is unbelievable—and that it would not only neglect its duties as a government, and not only neglect its duties, I say to the Attorney General, as the chief legal officer and the person there to provide some measure of independence in the midst of this debacle, but they would also violate their democratic and legislative duties to stand up and defend their position in the Legislature.

These are serious charges made by a member of the Legislature who has served in this Legislature, served in the government certainly long enough for everybody in this House to take them pretty darned seriously. He's not going to let go of this one, I can assure you. Dalton McGuinty and Ontario Liberals are not going to let go of this one, I can assure you. We must get to the bottom of it, and I cannot believe the government of Ontario will not defend itself.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I'm a little bit stunned this morning as to what this government has now decided to do. I hope they reconsider their position and actually take the time to participate in this debate. I imagine, Mr George, that this government is going to participate in this debate when it comes to the vote. They're going to stand in this Legislature en masse and vote against and kill the motion that calls for a public inquiry.

I say to the government, if you want to stand up and vote against having a public inquiry, you should at least have the decency to get up in this Legislature and tell us, the members, and the George family and the rest of the population that's watching, why you choose to do that. This is really the most despicable thing I've seen in a long time.

Mr Levac: A free vote, Gilles?

Mr Bisson: There are no free votes on that side.

Let me just go through a couple of things—I just wanted to start on that, because to me that is really beyond the pale. What is clear in this debate is that there is a mounting pile of evidence—what the government said in its first defence around “Did they have any role in the George shooting?”—starting to demonstrate that in fact there is a smoking gun, that there is something that indicates that what the government initially said when it came to its defence is really quite contrary to what the facts point to. There are all kinds of documents now that demonstrate that the government, quite frankly, was very much involved in the final decision to send the police into the park that resulted in the murder of Dudley

George. For this government to say they won't participate in debate but are prepared to vote against this motion—or are they going to abstain, which I really doubt, because if they abstain, it means to say we, the opposition, will carry the day. I have to believe that they're going to be voting in opposition to this motion. I think that's really, really despicable.

1120

There are a few things that have to be said. Mr Phillips laid out the facts as they present themselves as to the government's involvement. I want to come back and just concentrate on another issue. That issue is: one of the comments that was made by Premier Harris at the very beginning of all of this, according to the notes that we see from the conversations that happened in cabinet prior to the actual murder of Dudley George—there were a couple of comments made that, to me, are quite astounding. The one comment that really blows me away is the comment that says, “The Premier does not want to be seen as working with Indians.” I'm telling you, that is the most shocking thing that I've seen around this place. There's nothing that comes even close to it.

We're the immigrants here. We're the people that came into this country. It's not as if we came to this country and asked the native people to come here. They were here before us, and for the Premier of Ontario to take the position that he doesn't want to be seen as working with our First Nations people, to me is beyond the pale. If I look at the record of the government over the last eight years, there has been hardly an example shown anywhere that this government was prepared to do something positive toward the First Nations people of this province.

Quite aside from what happened with the Dudley George case, there are all kinds of pressing, pressing issues that have to be dealt with in First Nations communities. I represent James Bay. I represent Constance Lake. There are First Nations communities across this province, as in my riding, who are crying for help, who are saying, “We have some serious economic problems.” There is no economic activity in their communities. How do you attract a car plant, or how do you attract any kind of economic opportunity to a community like Ogoki, that is at least 200 miles north of any highway? The government of Ontario's not doing anything to address the issues in that community.

You have acute housing shortages in communities like Fort Albany, Kashechewan and others, where you've got as many as 20 or 30 people living in one house. Ask yourself a question: how does a child learn at school when you have overcrowding inside the house? We're not talking about South Africa; we're talking about Ontario, a prosperous province such as Ontario that has the means to help but refuses to, and then a Premier that says, “I don't want to be seen as working with Indians because, politically, that's not the picture I want to give to the province of Ontario.” I think it's a pretty sad reflection.

I had an opportunity here last fall when the assembled chiefs of the Mushkegowuk Tribal Council came here to

Queen's Park to assist me in trying to get a motion passed here in the Legislature that would have said a very simple thing: that whenever there is development in the mining or forestry sectors in and around First Nations communities north of 50, there be a mechanism to do taxation, as we have with any other community in the province of Ontario. The thing would have been very simple. If, for example, you build a car plant in Windsor, well, you know what? The car plant pays taxes to the municipality. Everybody accepts that as good business. If there is a mine found in Timmins, the mine pays taxes to the city of Timmins. Everybody accepts that. The companies accept it; the population accepts it; everybody thinks that's a good thing. Why? Because that's how we pay for the infrastructure of our communities. But if you develop any kind of economic activity such as mining or forestry in and about a First Nations community, there is absolutely no mechanism to give the First Nations community any kind of share of the profit from that activity that's happening on their land.

We asked a very simple thing in this Legislature. We said, "We call on the provincial government to start a process of discussion with First Nations communities, the federal government and the province about developing a mechanism to share in the profits of those particular corporations that are doing business in and about First Nations communities so they can share in the wealth, as all other communities in the province can."

This government en masse, in front of the assembled chiefs of the Mushkegowuk Tribal Council and their Grand Chief Toby Beck, stood in opposition to that motion. Quite frankly, I was shocked, because early on I was getting indications from the government, from discussions I had with them for a couple of weeks before the motion, that they were actually in favour of starting that discussion. I thought, "Finally, we're going to get some progress under the Tory administration." Instead, they stood up—the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, the AG responsible for native issues in the province of Ontario, the Minister of Energy, the MNR minister—all ministers that deal with First Nations communities and the entire government got up and voted in opposition.

Why I raise that is I think it's pretty indicative of the comments that were made by Premier Harris in the summer of 1995 which was, according to the documents, that he doesn't want to be seen as working with those Indians. I say to him, first of all, that's a pretty racist thing to say. Number two, it looks like that was the policy of the government for the last eight years.

There are First Nations communities around this province who are in desperate need of assistance from this government, because clearly the federal government is not responding to the degree it needs to in those communities. The province could play a role, as we do with municipalities. We have no problem in this province supporting municipalities in Ontario, but we hide behind the fact that native communities are basically governed by the Indian Act, and because they are, we say, "Oh, we

can't give money for housing. We can't give money for water and sewers. We can't give money for any basic infrastructure because, oh, they're a ward of the federal government. They're responsible under the Indian Act." All native leaders, people in native communities and non-natives alike are saying to this government that we have to stop hiding behind the Indian Act. We have to stop hiding behind the whole federal government issue because, at the end of the day, if we don't take our responsibility here as a province, our communities and places like the James Bay and others are going to have a heck of a hard time trying to deal with issues that are very pressing.

I know other members of my caucus are going to want to speak to this, so I say in closing that we will be voting proudly in support of the motion that was put forward by Mr Phillips. We do that knowing that the government is not going to be voting in support of it. But we think it's important that at least some of the members of this assembly stand up in support of First Nations communities and in support of what's happened to the George family and their wanting to be able to bring an end to this and to have a public inquiry.

The fact that the government refuses to get up and even debate this issue, to me, is beyond the pale. For the member to get up at the beginning of the debate and say, "Because this is before the courts, we're not going to comment to the Legislature," there's a real hollow ring to that because (a) we're protected in this Legislature from anything we say being used in court—the reality is, you can't sue me for what I say in here, so what are you afraid of?—and (b) I think it shows an affront to the First Nations people of this province that this government is going to remain silent on what is one of the most crucial issues to the First Nations communities over the last eight years: the murder of Dudley George. I just can't believe that this government is refusing to speak to this particular motion.

This is your opportunity to be heard on it. We're calling on this government to participate in this debate, to vote in favour of this motion and once and for all to give some closure, but, more importantly, to make sure that we develop policies in this province that don't allow this incident to be repeated ever again. The only way we can do that is by a public inquiry.

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough-Rouge River): Bill 46, the Truth About Ipperwash Act, is before us. This bill was presented by my colleague from Scarborough-Agincourt. Let me say from the start that I have the greatest respect for this member. His integrity is unquestionable. His vigilance is known internationally. He's determined to get to the truth of this matter—not only he alone, but Dalton McGuinty and the Liberal Party are very much focused on getting to the truth of this matter.

Essentially what this bill is doing is addressing a very sad and critical period in our history—whether the Conservative Party wants to recognize it or not. The Ipperwash affair touches many aspects, but there remain many serious, difficult and fundamental questions to be answered in this issue. The killing of Dudley George, an

unarmed Canadian engaging in an inherent right to protest, was not only devastating to his family—his brother is here today—but also demands answers and justice, and is injurious to the aboriginal community at large.

1130

This matter, this issue, has been before the House many times. This incident, as you know, happened in 1995. In fact, this affair has been presented before our native community, the people of Ontario, Canada and the international community at large. This bill calls for an open public inquiry. It does so because there is something rather suspect going on here. We have learned over the past couple of years of political interference prior to the killing of Dudley George. The information, as presented by my colleague, is very, very telling. He has made this available to all members of the House and I hope they have read it; I'm sure they have read it. It establishes a direct link between what happened on that day, the actions of the Ontario Provincial Police and the role of the Mike Harris government.

Basically, what I see is the politicization of the situation. We have a Premier, according to the leaked information, meeting with officers and ordering them what to do. Yet we have officers wanting to do something different. As a matter of fact, the OPP would very much ask for separation of the OPP from the government to let the OPP get on with their work—but somehow we see a lot of interference here—and that's the only way we can have some independence in all of this. At least, that's what the evidence is saying. The consequence of this is the innocent killing of Dudley George.

Another important element in all this is it calls into question the many issues of native rights, something we have ignored and need to address. Therefore, the killing of Dudley George, the situation at Ipperwash and the disrespect of native rights surely imposes on all of us to finally bring truth to justice and justice to aboriginal people. It is time to find the truth about the killing of Dudley George. I personally fully—and Dalton McGuinty and all of us here—support the calling of a public inquiry.

I was appalled to notice that the member from London-Fanshawe, who represents the government here, a former police officer, refused to even speak on this most important issue. I have been here 18 years, and I can't recall at any time a private member's bill where the government refused to address an issue. This tells me there is something funny going on here.

Our human rights issues in this province are really appalling, and this one tells us exactly where this government is at. Even this policy today, as they go into another election, tells us how they target immigrants and other people. It's a "them and us" kind of a government. It is an extremely sad day in this province, and I fully support my member from Scarborough-Agincourt in putting this bill forward.

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): I rise in this House chagrined, embarrassed, ashamed of this

Legislature. We stand here with responsibilities and we stand here on this particular issue with special responsibilities. I address my remarks not to the members opposite, who have abdicated their responsibilities, but rather to the parliament of public opinion, because I ask every member of the public watching here to do something about this issue. This is a failure—a failure, as the members nailed to their seats opposite symbolically, without intending, tell us exactly what's at work here.

This is a question of no less than, what kind of province do we live in, in Ontario today, in 2003, eight years after a man has died in the prosecution of democratic rights, for the first time in the history of Ontario, a native Canadian killed in an interaction with our police forces? Yet the Premier's office is involved in this. The Premier's office is implicated. The stunning thing is, as we stand here in this House eight years later, with government backbenchers stuck to their seats, it's clearly possible that the Premier's office in Ontario in 2003 can arrange to elude accountability, even when a man dies. That is stunning. It is a failure of our institutions. You would think the fact that there is evidence—and there is clear evidence, notations in the police logbooks that talk about the involvement of the Premier's office, the highest office this level of government has to offer, save the symbolism of the Lieutenant Governor.

Yet there is no sense of obligation on the part of the officeholders or the people who prop up that office, the members opposite, to see the rudiments of accountability brought to bear—there is no conclusion you can draw after eight years of delay, denial and running away from the light—that the government and the Premiers have something to hide. It reflects so poorly on this House that our other mechanisms—the Attorney General, who is meant to be independent to a degree to advise the cabinet, has failed in his responsibilities, as have successive attorneys general in this particular job.

This House is meant to be the place to air the grievances, especially such serious grievances as this one: political interference with police action. There can't be too many more important things that the people who will go home from this place tonight want to be able to depend on, that we live in a society where that can't happen. Well, there is evidence—and each of the members of this House has seen it—evidence that there has been political interference. Yet it's still possible to have a lack of responsibility taken that would make this continue. There's a document to prove that this was a just occupation, that this is in fact an Indian burial ground. There are judge's comments that say the idea that shots were fired on the part of native protesters was a fiction created after the fact. There is a man, Dudley George, who died innocently—not an innocent man in the sense of a perfect man, but a man who deserves from this place nothing less than the respect and dignity that's not been accorded to him here right now.

We will all remain guilty of compounded injustice. There is no greater indictment, for a place that sends people here on behalf of others, to not be able to muster up justice. We stand here blocking and interfering until

we vote for this resolution on behalf of the dignity and the respect that after eight years Dudley George, Sam George and everyone here deserves.

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): I had not really thought I was going to speak to this issue today, but I feel compelled that I must.

The George family is here today, seeking what any Canadian citizen or resident of Ontario would consider their right. They are seeking justice, seeking the truth, and hoping that their elected representatives take what they are saying seriously, and do something with it.

The truth cannot ever be suppressed. It can be held back and delayed, but it can never in the end be suppressed. About 100 years ago, in France, there was a gentleman who was wrongly convicted and sent off to the penal colonies of Devil's Island in South America. His name was Mr Dreyfus and his crime, I suppose, was being Jewish. Because they needed a scapegoat, they sent him off. People in France started to rally against that, to see how inherently wrong it was.

1140

It took a great author, a great man, to stand up: Émile Zola. Probably the most famous thing he ever wrote was two words: "J'accuse," "I accuse." He wrote it and he wrote it again and again and again. It was only after Émile Zola personally had to take flight that the people of France started to look and say, "What was wrong? What has gone on here? Did Mr Zola have something to say? Did something need to be looked at?" As you know, Mr Speaker, it took several years after that, but an inquiry was held in that country and Mr Dreyfus was returned from Devil's Island and was subsequently cleared of all wrongdoing. But it took someone to say, "J'accuse."

I don't know whether it's appropriate to say that here in this Legislature, because I personally do not know all the facts as Mr Zola understood them in the case of Mr Dreyfus. But I will tell you that in the last 20 months that I have been in this Legislature, I have witnessed an awful lot of obfuscation and an awful lot of a government that is trying to hide something. I have seen a Premier try to take Canada's national newspaper to court. I have seen that every time Mr Phillips gets up or other members get up to ask questions, there are no answers forthcoming. I have seen a family on many occasions coming here to ask for something simple and decent, and I have seen nothing happen.

Today I see more of the same. I see the government members opposite sitting in their seats and refusing to say something. Well, I'm going to ask the members opposite who are refusing to say something to go the next step further. If you're not going to say anything and if you're not going to participate in this, I'm going to ask you to at least do the honourable thing: when the vote is called, don't vote. I'm going to ask you not to bring in legions of Tories to vote against something for which you will not speak. I am going to ask that you simply sit in your seat and not stand when it is time to have your name registered. I am asking that you do the right and

honourable thing: if you are not going to participate in something the electors have sent you here to do, that you not participate fully, that you let this motion pass even if you are not party to it and that you let the process unwind.

It is extremely unfortunate for the George family what they are going to have to do and the events which are going to unfold in the courts in September. They do not want that. They want this chamber to come to the resolution. They want to know that Dudley George did not die in vain. They want something to happen for all of the people of this province, and particularly for all of the native people who have an unqualified right, in my view, to their lands, an unqualified right to protect their culture, an unqualified right to respect those who have died in Indian burial places. That is what we need to secure in this Legislature. That's what needs to be said. If the members opposite do not wish to participate in such a debate, then I ask them to simply sit in their seats when the vote is called.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Further debate?

The mover of the motion has two minutes to respond.

Mr Phillips: In the strongest terms possible, I'm pleading with the House to agree to this bill.

Let me remind all of us about what happened here. The First Nations had evidence of a burial ground that was not being protected. They moved to protect it. An unarmed man was shot and killed; there was a judge who concluded that. He said that this was an unarmed man who was killed.

I am making the charge that there is overwhelming evidence that there was inappropriate political involvement at the highest level, the Premier's office, around the events at Ipperwash Provincial Park. I'm making that charge on the basis of eight years of gathering evidence.

The people of Ontario have a right to find out the truth about what happened at Ipperwash. The George family has a right to know. In my opinion, the government members are being part of a plan to cover this up. I do not understand how the government members would not take the time to look at the evidence and conclude that we need a public inquiry. This is extremely serious when the Premier's office can be involved in something like this and then the Premier's office can control whether or not the truth ultimately comes out. It's an extremely serious charge I'm making based on the evidence that I have.

I would urge the government members to think for themselves and to support this bill that will make sure we get at the truth about what happened at Ipperwash.

The Deputy Speaker: The time for private members' business has expired.

Pursuant to standing order 96(e), the proceedings of this House now stand suspended until 12 o'clock high noon.

The House recessed from 1146 to 1201.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): We will deal first with ballot item number 11. Mr Christopherson has moved private member's notice of motion number 9. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? It is carried.

TRUTH ABOUT IPPERWASH ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 CONCERNANT
LA VÉRITÉ SUR IPPERWASH

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): We will now deal with ballot item number 12. Mr Phillips has moved second reading of Bill 46. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members; this will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1202 to 1207.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour will please rise and remain standing until named by the Clerk.

Ayes

Agostino, Dominic	Crozier, Bruce	Martel, Shelley
Bartolucci, Rick	Curling, Alvin	Martin, Tony
Bisson, Gilles	Di Cocco, Caroline	Patten, Richard
Dombrogianni, Marie	Dombrowsky, Leona	Peters, Steve
Boyer, Claudette	Duncan, Dwight	Phillips, Gerry
Bradley, James J.	Gerretsen, John	Prue, Michael
Bryant, Michael	Gravelle, Michael	Pupatello, Sandra
Caplan, David	Kennedy, Gerard	Ramsay, David
Christopherson, David	Kormos, Peter	Ruprecht, Tony
Colle, Mike	Kwinter, Monte	Smitherman, George
Conway, Sean G.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	
Cordiano, Joseph	Levac, David	

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please rise and remain standing until named by the Clerk.

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Hardeman, Ernie	O'Toole, John
Baird, John R.	Johns, Helen	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Barrett, Toby	Kells, Morley	Sampson, Rob
Clark, Brad	Klees, Frank	Sterling, Norman W.
Coburn, Brian	Martiniuk, Gerry	Stewart, R. Gary
DeFaria, Carl	Maves, Bart	Tascona, Joseph N.
Dunlop, Garfield	Mazzilli, Frank	Tsubouchi, David H.
Ecker, Janet	McDonald, AL	Turnbull, David
Elliott, Brenda	Miller, Norm	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Flaherty, Jim	Molinari, Tina R.	Wilson, Jim
Galt, Doug	Munro, Julia	Young, David
Gilchrist, Steve	Mushinski, Marilyn	Wood, Bob
Gill, Raminder	Newman, Dan	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 34; the nays are 38.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

All matters relating to private members'—

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming-Cochrane): On a point of order, Mr Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: There is nothing out of order.

Mr Ramsay: Yes, there is something out of order. The member from Don Valley West insulted my colleague.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order, order. I did not hear anything; the table did not hear anything. But if any member has something they would like to withdraw, I would give them an opportunity to do it right now.

Hon David Turnbull (Associate Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation): Mr Speaker, I find it regrettable that I used the most logical term, "hypocrite," and I withdraw it.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: All matters relating to private members' business having been completed, I do now leave the chair and the House will resume at 1:30 this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1212 to 1330.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CANADIAN ENVIRONMENT AWARDS

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I was pleased to be able to attend the annual Canadian Environment Awards presentation on Monday, June 2, where activist, author, analyst, educator, researcher and consultant Gary Gallon received the citation of lifetime achievement for his dedication to the environment during his career. This honour recognizes exceptional dedication and outstanding long-term contributions to the Canadian environment. Mr Gallon is well known in that field. Along with the winner in the category of climate change, Bob Hunter, Gary founded Greenpeace Canada many years ago in British Columbia.

The group Cows and Fish won in the environmental learning category; Moira Brown of Bolton, Ontario, for restoration and rehabilitation; Herb Hammond of BC, for sustainable living; Tom Maccagno of Alberta, for conservation; and Lynda Lukasik of Hamilton, for environmental health.

Interestingly, one of the finalists was Save the Rouge Valley System, which has been very active in restoring fish and wildlife habitat along the Rouge River. They had received a grant from the Trillium Foundation in recognition of this work. Unfortunately, this grant has been pulled by the Trillium Foundation—I don't know whether the government has influenced that or not—supposedly because this organization, Save the Rouge Valley System, is being political. I think this is a wrong decision on the part of the government. That funding should be restored.

I think all these individuals and groups should be congratulated for their work on the environment.

GOVERNMENT CONTRACT

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Each passing day gives us yet more examples of how this government pours public money into private pockets. Using information obtained under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, New Democrats have discovered that the anti-union, anti-worker firm Cintas has quietly doubled the amount they charge the government to clean Brad Clark's hand towels in the Ministry of Labour. Since the contract with Cintas began just over three years ago, the price of these clean towels has increased by over 100%.

The contract with Cintas allows them to jack up the prices any time they want. They seem to be willing to take advantage of the taxpayers of this province by exercising this right whenever they please. Another interesting feature of the Cintas contract is a charge they tack on to the bill known as an "environmental charge" or a "delivery/environmental/energy charge" or sometimes just a "service charge."

This company, mind you, was the defendant in a class action lawsuit in the United States over the existence of these phony, scam charges. Last year, they agreed to settle a lawsuit for US\$14 million. Clearly, there is something wrong here.

Why is the government doing business with this company? How many other ministries and government agencies are being taken to the cleaners by Cintas?

I hope the government will truly come clean with the public and taxpayers' dollars, cancel this contract and come clean about any other dealings they have with these gougers.

MAGGIE MALONEY

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): For most 10-year-olds, success may be measured by the number of assignments finding their way to the fridge door in a show of support from Mom and Dad.

Maggie Maloney is a 10-year-old who attends St Thomas Aquinas Elementary school in Keswick. She was thrilled when her essay on heroes was the winning entry in the York Regional Police Chief for a Day contest. She was chief for a day on April 17. Maggie was picked up at her front door by a police cruiser and whisked off to police headquarters in Newmarket. Clad in her tailor-made uniform, she made her way to Chief Armand LaBarge's top-floor office. With one hand on the Bible, Maggie was officially sworn in and saluted by Chief LaBarge. Then it was off to the forensic identification unit for her police identification card.

It was an exciting day and a great experience for Maggie. But Maggie was back on the job on Sunday, May 25, with Chief LaBarge recognizing the first annual Show Me the Way Home campaign in Newmarket. This event was to heighten awareness for children and their families about keeping children safe in our communities.

Now, Maggie hasn't made up her mind yet about her future career. But law enforcement is definitely near the top of the list. Congratulations to Maggie Maloney, who recognized police officers as heroes every day of the week.

FOREST INDUSTRY

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): To say that the forest products industry in northern Ontario is going through a crisis seems more and more like a massive understatement. Layoffs at area sawmills are now well over the 1,000-person mark, and almost every day more are being announced. While the US softwood lumber duties and the rising Canadian dollar are two of the key factors in this growing economic disaster, and while some form of substantial mitigation is needed by the federal government, I firmly believe that the provincial government needs to play a far more active role in dealing with this huge blow to our northern economy. Both Natural Resources Minister Ouellette and Northern Development Minister Wilson need to understand that right now, forestry product companies and municipal leaders all across the north are dealing with real concerns about a reduction in wood supply and an increase in fibre costs that can only add to the pressures facing the industry. What is needed now is stability, and the province must at least commit to suspending any government action that could further destabilize supply. Great concern has been expressed about the Room to Grow process and what impact it may have, not only on our present situation, but on hoped-for expansions.

Ministers, we need public assurances that the province will step up to the plate and support our northern industry and its thousands of workers. We cannot stand by and watch this happen, and place the blame elsewhere, when the province clearly has a significant role to play in averting this crisis. You must give our municipal leaders a place at the table, as they will tell you that you must take specific action to help us through this dire situation. Sitting back and watching this unfold is unacceptable, particularly when so much is at stake.

INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S
FESTIVAL OF MISSISSAUGA

Mr Rob Sampson (Mississauga Centre): It's my pleasure to stand here today with some of my colleagues from Mississauga to inform the House that the eighth annual International Children's Festival of Mississauga is taking place this week until late in the evening—well, not too late, anyhow—of Saturday, June 7.

The Children's Festival brings exceptional artists from around the world to share their gifts with children of all ages, with an emphasis on preschool to grade 8 boys and girls. Last year, more than 15,000 young boys and girls attended this event. The theme for this year is "From Outer Space to Inner Peace," which captures the

festival's emphasis on stimulating the imagination and fostering the creativity that we all know lies in the hearts and minds of our young children.

I encourage everyone with children to experience this unique festival in Mississauga's beautiful Living Arts Centre and the surrounding streets of that area. The Mississauga downtown square offers amazing arts and science adventures, with activities both inside and outside. The many free attractions include hiphop and aerial dancing, interactive singing, storytelling and acrobatics. There's going to be a steel band there, an art-making tent, a technology workshop and a marketplace.

On behalf of all Mississaugans, I'd like to thank the hard-working festival board, the volunteers and the many others who make this outstanding event possible. I encourage all members here, and those watching, to come and work and play with our children.

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GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): The Harris-Eves government is starting to bear a startling resemblance to an earlier government. The Harris-Eves government lurched into the fifth year of its mandate this week. Who can forget the last government that went into its fifth year: the Bob Rae NDP government, which clung to power in that fifth year? A lot of comparisons.

The Harris-Eves government has increased the province's debt by \$21 billion; that's second only to the Rae NDP government increasing the debt by almost \$60 billion. Ernie Eves broke his own Taxpayer Protection Act; the NDP raised taxes more than any other government in provincial history. Ernie Eves had the Magna budget, betraying centuries of parliamentary tradition; the NDP had the social contract, betraying decades of their solidarity with the union movement. Ernie Eves promised a 20% tax cut; he broke that promise. The NDP promised no Sunday shopping; they broke that promise. Ernie Eves promised that selling the 407 wouldn't lead to skyrocketing tolls; he broke that promise. The NDP promised public auto insurance to bring down rates; they broke that promise—even though, I guess, they're promising that again now. Ernie Eves had a scandal-plagued government with ministerial resignations; the NDP had a scandal-plagued government with ministerial resignations. Experts say Ernie Eves is running a \$2-billion deficit this year, and that it may run higher than that; the NDP ran massive deficits too.

As the Harris-Eves government lurches into its fifth year, they're looking more and more like Bob Rae and the NDP every day.

APHASIA AWARENESS MONTH

Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington): I would like to stand in the House today and acknowledge that June is International Aphasia Awareness Month. Like most people, you've never heard of the word "aphasia," but

aphasia is a part of the diagnosis for approximately one third of all stroke survivors. Aphasia is a communications disorder where people have difficulty talking and understanding what is said. It is estimated that in Canada there are over 100,000 aphasics.

The goal of this international observation and event is to raise awareness of aphasia and the resources that are available to aphasics. Public awareness is a critical first step in easing re-entry back into the community for people who are afflicted.

In Ontario, we are fortunate that we have five aphasia centres. I'm very fortunate to have been involved over the last 19 years with the Burlington Aphasia Centre, now known as the Halton Aphasia Centre. Adult aphasics can visit the centre, along with their families, and receive various activities for rehabilitation and support and fellowship.

People are surprised to learn that just under 50% of all those people affected are under the age of 65. I encourage people to get involved and call the president, Bruce Howard, at 905-681-8805, and volunteer for a very great program in our community of Burlington.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): Like a creaking, tottering truck carrying too much baggage and running out of gas, the Tory government dragged itself into its fifth year this week.

It's been five long, dark, terrible years of cronyism, mismanagement and helping themselves and their friends instead of helping the people of Ontario; five years of pulling money out of public schools to fund private schools; five years of bad air; five years of polluted water; five years of lost opportunities in our colleges and universities; five years of failing to achieve our economic potential; five years of second-class treatment of our foreign-trained professionals; five years of talking tough on crime while yanking \$181 million out of actually fighting crime; five years of slinking, slithering, slipping toward the two-tier health care this government longs to embrace; five years of robbing our seniors of their dignity with substandard home care and nursing homes; five years of skyrocketing auto insurance rates; five years of shortages of doctors and nurses; five years of stifling the voice of the people with no public hearings; five years of self-serving, partisan advertising wasting taxpayer money; five years of failing to collect corporate taxes; five years of waste on government consultants; five years of a government out of ideas, out of energy and out for itself and its friends.

It's been five long, dark, terrible years. Now it's time for a change in Ontario.

HUNTSVILLE FIRE SAFETY AWARDS

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): Today I rise to recognize this year's recipients of the fire safety awards in the town of Huntsville, part of the great riding

of Parry Sound-Muskoka. These awards are given by the fire marshal to recognize outstanding contributions to fire protection and prevention in Ontario.

Robert Bulloch is the owner of McDonald's restaurants in Huntsville and Parry Sound. He has been a long-time supporter of fundraising initiatives for local fire departments. Mr Bulloch's latest venture has resulted in raising \$67,000 for Risk Watch, an injury prevention program for children. As a result of his donated time and energy, every primary school in the Huntsville-Lake of Bays area has been supplied with Risk Watch curriculum and resource kits. I congratulate Mr Bulloch and his staff on receiving the fire safety advocate award.

I'd also like to congratulate Ian Byers and his staff at MORE FM 105.5 in Huntsville on receiving this year's fire safety partner award. MORE FM provided on-air support for the fundraising efforts of the Muskoka Injury Prevention Coalition. Through the generous support of MORE FM and other community partners, the coalition raised thousands of dollars for the Risk Watch injury prevention program for children. Over the years, MORE FM has been a strong supporter of the fire department and is always willing to bring lifesaving messages to the community.

The support these people have provided in their community is a major step to guaranteeing a safer environment for local residents. Their hard work and generosity is truly appreciated.

VISITORS

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'm sure you'll all join me in greeting the parents of Caitlyn Hanley, one of our pages from Brantford: mom, Charmaine, and Dad, Jeff; and brother, Josh, and sister, Meghan. Both her brother and sister claim they can do a better job than Caitlyn. I look forward to that. We welcome them to the House today.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): We welcome our friends who have joined us. It's not a point of order, just like it would be out of order if I were to say that beside them is the Deputy Clerk's family, visiting from Alberta, but I'm sure we wish them well.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

VETERANS APPRECIATION DAY ACT, 2002

LOI DE 2002 SUR LE JOUR DE LA RECONNAISSANCE DES ANCIENS COMBATTANTS

Mr Bartolucci moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 86, An Act to proclaim Veterans Appreciation Day / Projet de loi 86, Loi proclamant le Jour de la reconnaissance des anciens combattants.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): Every June 6, Canadians commemorate the anniversary of the allied invasion of Normandy in 1944, commonly known as D-Day. On this day, 340 Canadians gave their lives and another 574 were wounded. It is appropriate to recognize and pay tribute to Ontario's courageous veterans who fought in World War II and in other conflicts, and who now make a very positive contribution in every community of this province.

This bill would proclaim the first Saturday in June of each year as Veterans Appreciation Day.

PUBLIC SECTOR ENERGY EFFICIENCY ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 SUR L'EFFICACITÉ ÉNERGÉTIQUE DU SECTEUR PUBLIC

Mr Cordiano moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 87, An Act to require that public sector organizations conduct an energy audit, submit an energy efficiency plan and implement the plan / Projet de loi 87, Loi exigeant que les organismes du secteur public fassent une analyse énergétique et soumettent et mettent en oeuvre un plan d'efficacité énergétique.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried

The member for a short statement?

Mr Joseph Cordiano (York South-Weston): This bill requires that all public sector organizations prepare and submit energy efficiency plans to the Minister of Energy after the completion of an energy audit. After the minister approves the energy efficiency plan, the public sector organization is required to implement it.

I believe the time has come for conservation to start to take hold, not only in the public sector, directly influenced or run by the government, but in the broader public sector. We can ill afford in this province to continue to waste energy in the way we do, and I think this bill will see to it that the broader public sector in fact begins a conservation plan that is badly needed in this province, given the energy crisis we're facing.

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STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The Minister of the Environment.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Welcome back.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Thank you. I could say that to you every day because I think you visit planets we've never been to.

I want to remind everyone that today, June 5, is World Environment Day. It's a time to encourage people everywhere to do their part to protect their air, water and land.

The Ontario government is a leader in environmental protection. We recognize that a well-protected environment is absolutely fundamental to the high quality of life we enjoy in this great province. Our government has taken unprecedented action to protect Ontario's environment. I want to take a few moments to outline some of those actions.

Consider our clean water strategy, which includes the most comprehensive protection in the province's history. This government has spared no effort to ensure that Ontario has and enforces the toughest drinking water standards in the world. In August 2000 we introduced Operation Clean Water. It included the drinking water protection regulation, which gave Ontario its first ever legally enforceable standards for drinking water quality. This regulation also includes strict requirements for testing, treatment and reporting.

To ensure compliance with this regulation, we implemented annual inspections of all municipal water facilities in the province. We have also hired and trained 51 new water treatment plant inspectors and 10 supervisors to do this work.

The release of Commissioner Dennis O'Connor's report of the Walkerton inquiry was an important milestone in this government's efforts to offer clean, safe drinking water to everyone in Ontario. Commissioner O'Connor's report amounts to a new vision of water protection for Ontario. The Ontario government is committed to implementing all 121 of his recommendations.

One of the key O'Connor recommendations is the creation of a Safe Drinking Water Act, which was passed in this House in December 2002. Among other things, this act makes Ontario the first province with the authority to require mandatory licensing and accreditation of laboratories that perform drinking water testing; requires the certification of all drinking water system operators, including those operators that have been grandparented under the old certification regime; and requires an owner's licence for municipal drinking water systems. We've also created the new position of chief drinking water inspector, fulfilling another O'Connor recommendation.

Another important piece of legislation passed by this House is the Sustainable Water and Sewage Systems Act. It will ensure that effective water and sewage services are protecting the health of Ontarians, not just today but for generations to come.

As I said earlier, our comprehensive approach to water is one that protects this important resource from source to tap. And in that regard, source protection is integral to our clean water strategy.

We recently released for consultation the final report of the Advisory Committee on Watershed-Based Source-

Protection Planning. The committee has provided us with excellent recommendations on ways to protect the sources of our drinking water. Like the members of this committee, our government recognizes the importance of source protection. We are committed to introducing legislation on source protection planning later this year.

On the same day our government released the committee report, we announced important actions regarding permits to take water, including a six-month moratorium on new permits to take water for the Oak Ridges moraine and the Niagara Escarpment. This moratorium protects two of southern Ontario's most environmentally sensitive areas. It also builds on the excellent work of my colleague the Minister of Municipal Affairs with respect to the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act, 2001.

Our focus on water is understandable, but we're also working hard to reduce air pollution and provide the public with information about the air they breathe. Our government continues to be a leader in comprehensive air quality initiatives.

Most recently, we opened a new air monitoring station in Belleville. This brings the number of monitoring stations in Ontario to 37, an increase of seven since 1995. We've increased from six to seven the number of times the provincial air quality index is reported daily. The AQI serves to ensure that vital information is easily available to all citizens. And we are the first province in Canada to include fine particulate matter in our air quality index.

OnAir, the on-line emissions reporting registry, is another way of ensuring public access to information. OnAir provides emissions reports by facilities in the electricity, industrial, commercial, institutional and municipal sectors. The information we gain will help us develop our actions to improve air quality, including our proposed clean air plan to reduce industrial air emissions.

We already have in place stringent caps for the electricity sector. When the caps, which are being progressively phased in, are fully implemented in 2007, they will reduce the limits for smog- and acid-rain-causing emissions by 53% for nitrogen oxides and 25% for sulphur dioxide. This is the equivalent of removing more than one million cars from Ontario roadways.

As well, we've passed a regulation requiring Lakeview generating station to stop burning coal by April 30, 2005, something neither the official opposition nor the third party did when they were in office. Our throne speech also highlighted our commitment to phase out all coal-fired generating stations no later than 2015, a reasonable and reachable goal that will not put the taxpayers at risk.

This government created the Drive Clean program. Significant emissions reductions are being made through Drive Clean, which now covers all municipalities in the "smog zone" from Windsor to the Quebec border. Beginning next year, heavy-duty diesel trucks and buses on Ontario roadways must meet the strictest emissions standards in North America.

We've also strengthened Ontario's Smog Patrol, which targets the most grossly polluting vehicles on Ontario roadways. The Smog Patrol is just one of many ways we're maintaining and enforcing Ontario's environmental laws.

Another is the environmental SWAT team, which is getting tough on polluters in sectors that traditionally have compliance problems or have the potential to significantly affect public health.

Backing our various enforcement measures is a penalty regime that includes the highest fines and longest jail terms in Canada for major environmental offences.

This government is taking decisive action to protect Ontario's environment. In the spirit of the occasion, I encourage all my colleagues to take this opportunity to redouble their efforts to communicate to their constituents what they can do to protect and enhance the environment.

The Speaker: Responses?

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I'm going to do some communicating. I'm going to communicate with the Minister of the Environment and his government on what it could do and what it is not doing to save the environment in this province.

First of all, we have to recognize that everything this government has done in the field of the environment it has done never in its wildest dreams planning to do so, and to this very day doesn't want to do it. So let's recognize that, that anything that has been done has been because of public pressure because of the kind of media attention that prompts this government to take some action.

Smog is estimated by the Ontario Medical Association to kill over 2,000 people per year prematurely in this province, and yet we see inadequate action being taken on smog issues. Day after day, almost, there are press conferences held in this building by environment and public interest groups describing where this government is falling down on its job and making wise recommendations that the government never seems to follow.

As finance minister, remember, Ernie Eves cut one third of the staff of the Ministry of the Environment and one half of the operating budget of the Ministry of the Environment, placing it in a very vulnerable position and not allowing it to do the job it is supposed to do.

We all remember the Walkerton tragedy, which killed seven people and made over 2,000 people very, very ill. The Walkerton inquiry found that the Harris-Eves government's reckless cuts contributed to this tragedy.

We find out from NAFTA, the NAFTA environmental division, that Ontario is now the third-worst polluting jurisdiction in all of North America.

We know that gridlock costs the GTA some \$2 billion a year in productivity, and yet we see a government that has dragged its feet until it's been forced into taking action on transportation issues, particularly as they relate to public transportation. Even today, municipalities receive far less than they used to from the provincial government in terms of support for public transportation.

Things have gotten much worse under the Harris-Eves government. In 2002, there were 27 smog days in Ontario, breaking 2001's record, which was the worst in history. When the Harris-Eves government first took office in 1995, there were 11 smog days.

The Ontario Medical Association, in addition to telling us how many people die prematurely, said 13,000 additional emergency room visits and \$1.1 billion in health care costs are incurred as a result of smog.

We have to remember as well that since 1995, Ontario has seen the largest increase in pollution in all of North America. Ontario now imports four times as much hazardous waste from the US as it did when the Harris-Eves government took office in 1995. The Sierra Legal Defence Fund documented more than 10,000 violations of Ontario's water pollution laws between 1995 and 1999. The Harris-Eves government laid only 11 charges.

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At present, the Ontario government spends only \$5 million per year to assist municipalities in improving waste diversion, funds allocated from the LCBO.

As finance minister, Ernie Eves cancelled all provincial support—\$35 million per year—for waste diversion and blue box recycling in 1995. In other words, we have a record which is not to be bragged about, but a record of which this government should be ashamed.

We recognize that they've done nothing about source protection of water. In fact, I recall that there were over 700 monitoring stations on streams and rivers in this province. That was reduced drastically to somewhere around 200. So about 500 monitoring stations were removed at the very time we recognized that there were problems in the environment.

The select committee on alternative fuels had dozens upon dozens of excellent recommendations, but virtually none of them have been implemented. This is collecting dust that I have to wipe off this particular report.

The Walkerton report: only half of the recommendations have been implemented so far. I know that the Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation must be very concerned, because he announced the Walkerton inquiry.

I want to say as well that unfortunately this government joined Ralph Klein in fighting against improvement of the situation that would have been dealt with by the Kyoto accord: global warming. This government decided it would align itself with Ralph Klein and the anti-environment group.

Tay River in eastern Ontario: this government overturned a decision and allowed a company to take millions upon millions of gallons of water from the Tay River.

There's nothing being done about energy conservation. They've pulled the grant from the Save the Rouge group, and nutrient management legislation has not been fully implemented.

It's a dismal record, of which the minister should be ashamed.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): It seems as though the minister's head is still in the clouds, up in

the Eiffel Tower, from when he was in France, when people back here in Ontario were breathing in smog and prematurely dying from the pollution belching out of his coal plants. Where was he, on taxpayers' money, while hydro rates had gone soaring because of this government's deregulation? He was over strolling around in France and up in the Eiffel Tower, as hard-working people here in Ontario—

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): Don't forget Rome.

Ms Churley: I mustn't forget Rome.

Mr Agostino: And London.

Ms Churley: That's right—and London. He was strolling around in these countries, partly at taxpayers' expense, while people over here were suffering from those high, spiralling, out-of-control hydro rates and breathing in increasingly polluted air from those dirty, polluting coal plants.

The minister has the nerve to stand up here today and say that they are acting on the recommendations from the Walkerton inquiry. Very recently the government admitted that they've only completed 16 of 121 recommendations from these reports. Despite the recommendations from this inquiry and despite Justice O'Connor saying that this government bore some responsibility for what happened in Walkerton, we've recently heard the minister and the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound once again say, "No, it's not our fault. We had nothing to do with it. It was just the Koebel brothers."

Here we have a minister standing up today and bragging about having completed 16 of 121 recommendations. Still, to this day, the government clearly has not learned its lesson that public water testing labs and public investments are key components of the Safe Drinking Water Act.

Another thing I want to point out again is that the Toronto Star recently revealed that there were 533 bad water reports from drinking water systems throughout the province last year. The environment ministry reports that 40% of water systems in Ontario are out of compliance. This is after Walkerton, and still, three years later, we have those 40% of water systems out of compliance. While the minister was running around in France, Rome and London, here we are back in Ontario having to deal with the possibility of another Walkerton because this government has not acted fast enough.

On top of that, the government failed to spend over \$200 million in municipal infrastructure funds targeted for water projects.

We obtained a copy of a cabinet document showing that the minister intended to delay implementing the nutrient management regulations until possibly 2016. That's for 97% of farms in this province. This is after Walkerton. That would be 16 years later.

Minister, you have failed to follow through on your commitment to implement Walkerton. Don't stand up there and say that you have. In the 2001-02 budget the government set aside \$200 million in municipal infrastructure projects in OSTAR and the millennium part-

nership initiatives. The ministry officials confirmed that over half of that money was intended for municipal water projects but only \$29 million of the \$200 million was actually spent, leaving over \$100 million in budgeted money for municipal water projects unspent for that year. I guess it must be the red tape. They bragged so much about cutting red tape, yet they said that they withheld this money because some of the municipalities were having trouble fulfilling the requirements in the application forms.

On air: on World Asthma Day my leader, Howard Hampton, and I made an announcement that we were setting up a puffer bank for used asthma puffers to show the impact of the Conservative government's polluting policies.

In Ontario, 2,030 people will die prematurely from dirty air, including 530 in Toronto and 360 in the rest of the GTA. That's according to the Ontario Medical Association's latest figures. Yet we've called on the government repeatedly to bring in intense conservation programs.

As my leader, Howard Hampton, recently announced through our Public Power document, we will close down the coal-fired plants by 2007. Part of the way to do this is to get serious about conservation and efficiency. We announced a 20-20 plan based on a successful plan in California that works, that would help people conserve and be more efficient in their use of energy.

The government has done nothing. In fact, the conservation plan we put into place when we were in government went out the door. This government has nothing to brag about on World Environment Day. On the contrary, they should be ashamed of themselves.

ORAL QUESTIONS

MINISTER'S EXPENSES

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): My question is to the Deputy Premier. Ontario Power Generation cannot be a money-laundering operation for unwanted expenses of ministers of the Harris-Eves government. Yet that is exactly what has happened with this recently published report—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): We're going to have to watch our language. The word "money-laundering" borders on it. I would ask the member to kindly try and think about what he's saying.

Mr Bryant: Withdrawn.

Look, there are various ways to describe what has happened, but money that ought to have been disclosed through freedom of information, that ought to have been paid out of the consolidated revenue fund, that ought to have been claimed by the Minister of Energy, was funnelled through Ontario Power Generation.

There are a lot of problems with that. The first one is, the minister is keeping expenses from the public. You

cannot hide expenses from the public. You know, when you funnel it through a government enterprise corporation like OPG, that's exactly what happens, because there's no way to get access to that information.

So I say to you, Minister, is it all right for Premier Eves and the Eves government to funnel money through government enterprise corporations as the Minister of Energy did last summer?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Deputy Premier, Minister of Education): I'll refer that to the Minister of the Environment.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): I think the trip you're speaking about was a trip with respect to Scotland and London from Paris and Rome. The trip was organized, endorsed and recommended by OPG. OPG paid for ground transportation. I know that you personally talked to OPG today and OPG told you it was an expense for ground transportation.

Further to that, the nub of the problem is this: I didn't file any expenses for the government to pay for the trip in Paris at all. Nothing; not a meal, not a hotel, not a bagel, or a can of Tropicana orange juice. The problem you're faced with is this: you think somehow that, in your language, as a shareholder of OPG organizing the trip, we have reached reptilian, sewer-dwelling levels in this Legislature.

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Mr Bryant: I say to the minister, because I take it you're going to answer these questions, is it your position that it is OK to submit this kind of expense through Ontario Power Generation, and have you submitted any other such expenses through Ontario Power Generation when you were the Minister of Energy?

Hon Mr Stockwell: Yes, I think ground transportation on a trip is acceptable, organized by OPG. And yes, you know full well I incurred and submitted no other expenses to OPG.

I would also note that the story in the *Globe and Mail* today, as torqued as it was, didn't indicate to the people who were reading it that not one thin dime was expensed to the government by me for my family that was on my trip. I take great exception to seeing members quoted in the paper suggesting that if you're going to go on a two-week trip as a minister of the crown, you can't take your family but not charge the government. This is absolutely patently absurd. You've got to crawl out of this world you're living in. The bar you're setting is so high, not a soul on this earth could clear it.

Mr Bryant: The minister doth protest too much. I am not asking about the expenses of your family. I am asking about Ontario Power Generation.

It is not OK for a minister of the crown to have a company that makes money in the energy sector have an expense account for the minister. It is not OK for the Attorney General to have a law firm pick up the expenses of him travelling across Europe, and he would never do that. It is not OK for a housing minister to submit expenses to a developer for ground transportation on a

business trip to Europe. It is not OK for the government of Ontario to have a minister submit expenses for his business to Ontario Power Generation, and if you think that is OK, I would like to know, what other times did you submit expenses through Ontario Power Generation, and do you continue to submit expenses through government enterprise corporations today?

Hon Mr Stockwell: You know what? I answered that question. This was it, the only time; I never have again.

This is just how absurd we've become in this place. He's comparing a housing minister and a developer paying for ground transportation. News flash: as the Minister of Energy, you are the single shareholder for Ontario Power Generation, the single shareholder. The Minister of Housing doesn't own the development company. It's just patently absurd, and I am taking great offence because I know the situation is simply this: when you file expenses, you're ratcheted and beat up. When you don't file expenses, you're ratcheted and beat up. Yes, this is an acceptable expenditure, organized by OPG, meetings operated by OPG, attended by myself, staff, and the deputy minister. This is a seriously flawed line of questioning.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr Bryant: This is a seriously flawed line of reasoning for the former Minister of Energy. I'm sorry I have to ask this question, but I have to ask this question. I take it you submitted expenses through Ontario Power Generation. Did you submit any invoices or expenses to any other corporation that you had dealings with during the European business trip? Would that be OK, Minister? Did you do that or not?

Hon Mr Stockwell: No, Mr Speaker.

Mr Bryant: Again, I say to the Minister of Energy, my question is not about the business trip itself and the question is not about the attendance of your family. The member said that he paid for those expenses, and I take the honourable member at his word.

However, that's not what the minister told a member of the press gallery in January of this year. The press secretary to the Premier of Ontario today said that when she was press secretary to you, she was told to inform this journalist that you in fact did not bring your family along. Were you telling the truth then, or are you telling the truth now?

Hon Mr Stockwell: You know, this is just insane. I am now in a situation with a member across the floor making an allegation that he heard from a reporter that somebody in my office was told to say something that wasn't true. That is such a stretch. That is completely inaccurate. I would never, ever in my political life tell somebody to go and tell a reporter something that I knew was factually incorrect.

I have great respect for all honourable members. I have respect for you. I am an honourable member. My staffer didn't say that. I believe the member of the gallery may have been confused—as he was confused this afternoon at 12 o'clock when he went on the air and said I spent \$27,000 alone in Europe when the \$27,000

included me, staff and the deputy minister. He confused that.

Let's get it together. He possibly could have been confused about the others.

Mr Bryant: Minister, there remains a serious problem with respect to public disclosure of information of expenses involving government enterprise corporations not subject to the freedom of information act. We don't know whether OPG paid for items for you as energy minister in addition to this ground transportation. That is totally inappropriate.

So my question to you as a minister is—and it's not just with respect to OPG and Hydro One; it's with respect to all government enterprise corporations not subject to freedom of information act requests: will the government release all expenses submitted through those corporations that involve a minister of the crown? Will you release—

Interjection.

Mr Bryant: All the ministers doth protest too much.

You know very well that there are monies and expenses being funnelled through government enterprise corporations to avoid public disclosure. You know it.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. The member for St Paul's.

Mr Bryant: So my question is, Minister, so that you can assure the public that in fact—

Interjection.

The Speaker: The member take his seat. The last warning for the Minister of Energy. If he yells out one more time, he's gone.

Sorry, to the member for St Paul's.

Mr Bryant: So that you can assure the public, Minister, that in fact all expenses that are put through OPG, Hydro One and otherwise—and I seem to remember you having a lot of problems with some expenses involving Hydro One a year ago. You had a big problem with outrageous expenses from the CEO for Hydro One. So I would think that you would care about this.

So my question is this: will you disclose the expenses, currently undisclosable to the public, that go through government enterprise corporations? Will you do that?

Hon Mr Stockwell: I say to the member opposite, without any equivocation whatsoever, the only expense incurred by OPG was for ground transportation. Never was there expense incurred by OPG on my behalf for any other expense on any other trip for any other purpose. I will tell you, that is the absolute, categoric position. I know the member spoke to OPG today and that OPG told you exactly the same thing.

The Speaker: New question?

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): To the Minister of Environment: Minister, you can be as indignant and as histrionic as you want to be, but excuse us for being skeptical over here, because this is the second time we know of that your hand has been caught in the cookie jar. You were forced to pay back over \$3,000 in bar tabs, expenses that you and your staff didn't declare before. You declared it only after it was in the media.

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What makes it even worse, last summer, when your government's privatization and deregulation scheme was sending hydro rates soaring all across Ontario and when our coal-fired plants were belching deadly smog into the air, where were you? What was the minister doing? You were living the high life on the boulevards of Paris and Rome and sending the bills to hydro ratepayers. That's right. Amazingly, Ontario Power Generation picked up thousands of dollars worth of these expenses.

Minister, I consider this a gift to you from OPG. I want to know, why did you not declare this to the Integrity Commissioner of this province?

Hon Mr Stockwell: First of all, on this trip, I charged two types of charges: my flight and my hotel room. I charged not a meal, not an orange juice, not a bagel—my flights and my hotel room, nothing more.

The fact is this: it never crossed my mind that anyone would think ground transportation would be a gift. The minute I saw it in the story today, I phoned the Integrity Commissioner's office and asked them to look into it. They said, "Thank you very much. We will investigate to determine if it's a gift." Personally, I think it's a stretch to suggest that ground transportation is a gift.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Among the many problems here is that Mittelstaedt indicates that the minister says he decided to pick up his hotel cost during the six-night stay in Paris because there was so little business being conducted.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I never said that.

Mr Kormos: Well, the Mittelstaedt article indicates the minister says he picked up hotel costs. It also says that the only expense OPG paid was the cost of a van rental during the stay in Paris, yet OPG says they spent \$5,000 to \$10,000; \$5,000 to \$10,000 is far in excess of van rental, even in the city of Paris, for but one week. Minister, why is there that discrepancy in the report of the facts?

Hon Mr Stockwell: Mr Mittelstaedt totally torqued and fabricated that story—absolutely torqued and fabricated. I never at any time said the agenda was so skinny. That is torqued and fabricated. What I said was that because we couldn't get a connecting flight to Rome, the stay was prolonged. I said that I will pay for the hotel and all other expenses, as any honourable member would do. Not a nickel was spent by the taxpayer on my children or wife, who were attending.

Mr Mittelstaedt torqued and prevaricated to get a story he had been working on for six months, because all he could get out of it was a ground transportation issue. He talked to 15 people, asking them, "Did OPG or did anyone else pay for these?" Fifteen people said no. He spent six months on that story. He had to file something. He torqued it to the highest order.

Hon Brad Clark (Minister of Labour): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: If I may, just quickly, I have a concern with regard to the last question of the member for St Paul's. In his last question, he stated that regularly

members of cabinet are using funds from government agencies for other purposes. With the greatest of respect, Mr Speaker, it states very clearly in the standing orders that you can't make allegations of that nature against another member. I would ask you if you can check the Instant Hansard and see what he said. I know he's an honourable member and he will withdraw it. It was emotional, but he will withdraw it.

The Speaker: We will confer with the table quickly.

I thank the member. No one heard that, if anybody did say that. We will be able to get the Hansard, which isn't quite this instant. He would withdraw it if he can, at any time.

We will listen very carefully. We're in very emotional territory here when we get into these circumstances. I would ask all members to watch very carefully.

I will say this: I'm going to be on the edge of my seat listening, as is the table, and we'll listen to the best of our ability to make sure nothing is said that is unparliamentary, and if it is, we will act very quickly.

The member for Niagara Centre.

Mr Kormos: If the minister could only feign sincerity as well as he feigns indignation, his career would be established.

There are some serious problems here in terms of the numbers. OPG is reported as saying they spent \$5,000 to \$10,000 on your junket to France, England, Scotland and Italy. You insist that you only accepted money for one week of transportation while in Paris during a period of time that you regarded as vacation time, such that you paid your own hotel bills.

You have accused Mr Mittelstaedt, a veteran newspaper, a veteran journalist, of prevarication. The facts in his article are a serious indictment and cause serious concerns. I put to you, Minister, in view of the controversy that now exists and your statements regarding Mittelstaedt and his prevarication, that there is a serious need for a thorough investigation into this matter. Will you step aside while that inquiry takes place?

Hon Mr Stockwell: This is bordering on Fellini-like. You've got to think you're in a Fellini movie at this point in time. I never said—

Interjection.

Hon Mr Stockwell: They provided ground transportation in Paris and in Rome. I told you that's what they supplied, and that's what they paid for—nothing more, nothing less. If you believe there was anything inappropriate about that—I phoned the Integrity Commissioner's office and asked them to investigate. They said I phoned in a timely fashion, considering the story was in the paper today. I think we should all give the Integrity Commissioner, the Honourable Justice Coulter Osborne, who had approved these expenses previously I might add, the opportunity to review this before we start hanging members in this Legislature from the gallows because one reporter who provided no facts in this story decided this was the approach to take. I would give you the equal break with respect to Justice Coulter Osborne as I gave the member from Windsor with respect to the Purolator

package. Let's see what the Integrity Commissioner says, because I believe categorically, without debate, that this is a stretch of epic, stilted proportions.

PROTECTION FOR HEALTH CARE WORKERS

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a question for the Minister of Health. New Democrats have called on you for a full public inquiry into SARS and for whistle-blower protection to ensure that health care providers do not suffer any reprisals from their employers if they come forward.

On Tuesday, you took exception to that, and you argued that if there was any evidence that an employer was intimidating or threatening a health care worker, to let you know and you would stop it right away. Virginia Wooland was an employee of the Toronto-Sunnybrook Regional Cancer Centre. At a press conference at the centre on February 10, 2003, she asked you a question about long waiting lists for cancer surgery. She was fired three days later. Her dismissal letter specifically references the incident of February 10, the same day she asked you a question at a press conference. I would like to know what you have done about her employer, Cancer Care Ontario, an agency of your government, and what have you done to get her job back?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): In reference to your question, I want to state that under subsection 95(4) of the Health Protection and Promotion Act, "No action or other proceeding shall be instituted against a person for making a report in good faith in respect of a communicable disease or a reportable disease in accordance with part IV."

The honourable member might remember that in the early stages of the SARS outbreak, I designated, as I have the power to do under the act, that SARS be a communicable disease as well as a reportable and a virulent disease. So the protections she seeks for health care workers are in fact statutorily in place.

Ms Martel: The question was: what have you done about Virginia's employer, and what have you done to get her job back? You stood in this House Tuesday and took great exception to the question raised by my leader that somehow a health care worker in this province would suffer reprisal from an employer. That's what happened—an employer, I remind you, that your ministry provides full funding to. When your press secretary, Mr Paul Cantin, was asked about this incident on March 8, he said, "The minister could not comment on a personnel issue." I asked you about this matter on Tuesday, outside this Legislature, and what you were going to do to get Virginia her job back. You said you didn't know anything about this matter.

Minister, if this can happen to Virginia Wooland, it can happen to any health care worker who dares to raise concerns about health care in the province. We have workers today who are here from the Scarborough General Hospital, front-line heroes in the battle against

SARS. Given what's happened to Virginia and your complete lack of responsibility and your complete lack of action to do anything about her case, how can they be guaranteed they're not going to be fired if they come forward with concerns about SARS?

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Hon Mr Clement: She would be the first person standing up if I interfered with an employer-employee relationship with an arm's-length agency. She would be the first one standing in her place, demanding my immediate resignation and probably a public inquiry on top of that. So she speaks out of both sides of her mouth, I must say.

When she asks what protections I can give to our health care workers who are required under the HPPA to do their job, I cited subsection 95(4) of the HPPA, which I am duty-bound, as the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, to uphold and enforce, and she has my commitment that I will do my job. That is the answer to her question.

MINISTER'S EXPENSES

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): My question is to the government House leader. I heard you say it, and maybe you misspoke, but you could tell us what you meant by it: I heard you say in answer to the question in this House just now that the Honourable Justice Coulter Osborne, the Integrity Commissioner, initially approved of your expenses.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): Yes. Travel expenses.

Mr Bryant: Could you explain that? Could you elaborate on that? And would you disclose to the House, or otherwise to the public, this said approval?

Hon Mr Stockwell: I was speaking about the expenses that were filed during the process of this trip to Justice Coulter Osborne. All the government expenses were filed to him. He approved of all the expenses and signed off on them, saying they were appropriate and properly submitted and they were appropriately and properly repaid.

Mr Bryant: I remind the member—he will know, as government House leader and otherwise—that the Accountability for Expenses Act (Cabinet Ministers and Opposition Leaders), introduced with much fanfare last year, has a pretty gaping loophole in it in that the act requires reviewable expenses, disclosure of expenses that are expensed through the consolidated revenue fund. Of course, Ontario Power Generation expenses would not be through the consolidated revenue fund. We would never know that that expense had taken place, had you not told us and, in addition, that the expense was disclosed or the expense was incurred in the performance of a ministerial duty.

There is no way to ensure that government enterprise corporation expenses incurred by a minister will be disclosed. So my question is, and you may want to refer it to the minister responsible, will the government agree to fill

this loophole to ensure that government enterprise corporation expenses are in fact covered under this bill?

Hon Mr Stockwell: Chair of Management Board?

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Culture): If the member will recall, as we went through the review of the expenses for all members, all the cabinet ministers and certainly the Leader of the Opposition, one of the things I said at the time, and it's quite true and continues to be so, was that we continue to review the rules from time to time with the Integrity Commissioner. This is something that is a constant process; it's a process that continues. It did not end at the time we brought in the rules. So we do continue to review them.

TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): My question is for my honourable friend the Minister of Transportation. Early in the new year, I consulted with the 11 municipal councils in Waterloo-Wellington, challenging them to look to the promise of the future and highlight for me their transportation priorities for the next five years and beyond. On April 10, municipal representatives from my riding and I met with the minister to discuss what we are calling the Waterloo-Wellington transportation action plan. On May 1, at the first available opportunity, I informed the House about our transportation issues, which include implementing the corridor study of Highways 7 and 8 between Kitchener and Stratford; a new four-lane Highway 7 between Kitchener and Guelph; assistance for the county of Wellington to rebuild Highway 24 from Guelph to Cambridge; a repaired and upgraded Highway 6 from Fergus to Mount Forest; and Waterloo region's light rail transit initiative and other important transportation projects.

Could the minister inform the House what action the government is taking to assist us in Waterloo-Wellington with these transportation challenges?

Hon Frank Klees (Minister of Transportation): I'm pleased to do that. I want to commend the member from Waterloo-Wellington for his very strong advocacy on the part of his constituents.

I did, indeed, meet with representatives of the municipality as arranged by the honourable member. I'm pleased to report to him, as well as to his constituents, that in response to that meeting and the various issues that were brought forward to us at that time, we will, in fact, be completing the planning for a new Highway 7 from Kitchener to Guelph to relieve congestion by providing additional access to Highway 401 through its connection with the Hanlon Expressway.

I can also report to the member that we'll be widening Highway 8 between Conestoga expressway and Fergus Avenue and designing the next phase of the widening from Fergus Avenue southeasterly to Grand River. In addition to that, a number of the initiatives that were brought forward will be taken into consideration and put into our planning process.

This member is doing an outstanding job for his constituents in advocating for transportation issues. I just want to say that.

Mr Arnott: I thank the minister for his response. It's exciting to note that in recent days, work commenced to resurface Highway 89 between Mount Forest and Conn and repair two bridges across the Saugeen River, a \$5.4 million job.

This is hopefully the first of many responses to our Waterloo-Wellington transportation action plan, and I would expect that members of the House would agree that improving our highway system is only one part of the solution in reducing gridlock, creating jobs and improving our quality of life.

Will the minister update the House on actions he is taking to reduce gridlock and continue to improve the safe movement of people and goods in our Waterloo-Wellington area?

Hon Mr Klees: I'm glad to do that. The fact is, under our made-in-Ontario Smart Growth strategy, our government has made some long-term commitments to transit, as well as transportation—some \$13.5 billion committed over the next 10 years to deal with the kind of issues that the member has brought to our attention. In fact, last August, as part of our Golden Horseshoe Transit Investment Partnerships, we provided Waterloo some \$5.3 million to help expand bus service and to make improvements in their transit facilities. I point out to the member that this is in addition to the \$2.9 million allocated to Waterloo over the last two years to help replace and refurbish transit vehicles.

I also want to assure the member and his constituents that based on our long-term commitment to transit in this province, his constituents, the area of Waterloo and, in fact, right across the Golden Horseshoe, there will be tremendous opportunities for implementing transit-related initiatives in this province.

MINISTER'S EXPENSES

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): The question is to the government House leader. I asked you before about submission of all travel expenses to the Honourable Coulter Osborne. I understand you said that you submitted the government expenses. My question is, just so I'm very, very clear, did you submit the Ontario Power Generation expense to the Integrity Commissioner, and did he approve that OPG expense?

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): I never had it, I never submitted it, so Mr Coulter Osborne would never approve it. I did phone Mr Coulter Osborne this morning, considering the story that was in the paper, and asked him to adjudicate on it. His staff said to me, "Thank you for phoning. We will review it and get back." That's what I did.

Mr Bryant: The clear implication was that you said the Honourable Coulter Osborne approved all expenses. In any event, the Integrity Commissioner, I take it, is now

going to speak to this issue of whether or not the OPG expense was—

Hon Mr Stockwell: Yes.

Mr Bryant: Fine. Look, I'm not going to make any apologies at all as a member of the opposition for asking these questions, and you'd be doing the same thing if you were sitting over here.

1440

I say to the minister again, we clearly have a loophole in this bill, and to avoid any other such future excursions of this nature, I say to you in this Legislature, it would be best for the people of Ontario and for the government of Ontario if we filled this loophole. I understand the minister responsible says you're reviewing these things. You're always reviewing these things. There's clearly a loophole. I ask the minister responsible, and he'll have to be referred to you through the House leader, will you fill this loophole? Specifically, Minister, will you ensure that government enterprise corporation expenses such as this, currently reviewed by the Integrity Commissioner, become subject to full disclosure under your much-heralded bill, the Cabinet Ministers' and Opposition Leaders' Expense Review and Accountability Act. Will you change the bill to fit the loophole—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I'm afraid the member's time is up.

Hon Mr Stockwell: What I think we should do is let Justice Coulter Osborne review the situation and do his job. Now I can see how we can have a difference of opinion. If I somehow misspoke myself that gave you that impression, I apologize. It was always the expenses I was speaking about that were approved. But I will say this: as honourable members in this place, you've asked me a direct question, "What were these expenses?" and I've given you a direct answer. They were all ground transportation in Rome and Paris. I will stand by that statement at any time.

I asked Justice Coulter Osborne to review it. I took this trip and charged only flight and hotel. My children and wife—not a thin dime was charged to the government. If you know, why would I not charge a hotel and food and all that other expense that you have on a trip, but somehow if I thought this was inappropriate, charge that? There's an inconsistency here. I'm saying to you opposite, why don't we allow Justice Coulter Osborne, the Integrity Commissioner, to review this and adjudicate? I honestly believe that Mr Coulter Osborne will come back and say—

Mr Bryant: So I shouldn't ask?

Hon Mr Stockwell: I'm not saying you don't ask. I'm just saying that I think he'll come back and say, "We may just have a tempest in a teapot."

SENIORS' MONTH

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): My question today is for the minister responsible for seniors. Last week you introduced the Mandatory Retirement Elimination Act, an important piece of legislation that repre-

sents a major step forward in strengthening Ontario's human rights protections for all seniors. The introduction of this bill is particularly fitting because June is Seniors' Month here in Ontario. June is a time to celebrate and recognize the important role our seniors have played in the growth of our great province.

Minister, given the continuing contributions of our growing seniors populations, I'm sure seniors across Ontario would like to know the theme of this year's Seniors' Month and why it is important for all Ontarians to recognize and support our seniors every month of the year.

Hon Carl DeFaria (Minister of Citizenship, minister responsible for seniors): I thank the member for his question. As Ontario's minister responsible for seniors, I'm very proud of the enormous contributions Ontario's 1.5 million seniors have made and continue to make to our great province. Seniors' Month has been celebrated in Ontario for over 20 years, and I am pleased our government not only continues to support this tradition, but actively promotes Seniors' Month activities throughout the Ontario seniors' secretariat.

This year's Seniors' Month theme "Footsteps to Follow" highlights the wonderful example seniors have set and continue to set in sharing, learning and leading. Seniors' Month is a time to honour the sacrifices and contributions of men and women who have built this province and who continue to contribute to the quality of life we enjoy.

Mr Dunlop: Like most other members of this Legislature, I would like to recognize the important role seniors play in my own constituency, the riding of Simcoe North. I like to point out that usually at least once a year I have seniors' seminars in the town of Midland and in the city of Orillia. They're well attended by over 1,000 seniors at those two events. I think it's important that all members of this House provide that type of venue for our seniors because there's a lot of information available to seniors that they like to receive as well.

Minister, please tell me what is available from your ministry to help me, other MPPs and people in my constituency who wish to actively celebrate and promote Seniors' Month?

Hon Mr DeFaria: I encourage each member here today to help celebrate Seniors' Month by hosting or attending events that recognize older Ontarians in their respective constituencies. Each member will receive a communication package from my ministry to promote Seniors' Month events within their own communities. My ministry has also produced a poster and other materials that members can use and access to promote Seniors' Month in newsletters and local newspapers. Seniors' Month event listings from across the province will be posted and accessible on the Ontario seniors' secretariat Web site. I also encourage members to take advantage of the availability of a guide to programs and services for seniors in Ontario, a comprehensive listing of seniors' services offered by different levels of government and the community.

MINISTER'S EXPENSES

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): To the Minister of the Environment: today's article revealing facts around your two-week junket in Europe wasn't written by a Jayson Blair of the New York Times; it was written by Martin Mittelstaedt, a respected, long-time Canadian journalist. He reports that your staff person indicated that the OPG money was only to rent a van for use around Paris. He reports that it was during the Paris stay that you decided to pick up six nights of your hotel tab because there was so little business to be done that it in fact was a vacation. The article also states that OPG indicates that it spent \$5,000 to \$10,000 to subsidize your junket to Europe. Five to ten thousand dollars is at great variance with the cost of a van for one week in the city of Paris.

You've accused Mr Mittelstaedt of prevarication. You've called Mr Mittelstaedt a liar. In view of the discrepancies between your story and the reportage of Mr Mittelstaedt, will you stand aside so that this matter can be inquired into to determine which of you is telling the truth?

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): I think he should look at the story very carefully. I think it's very revealing. I think you would do very well to read it. The quote that you're attributing to me, "Because we had a prolonged stay in Paris we arranged meetings that were a little sparse, so I decided it was better I paid them"—I didn't say that. I said that because we had trouble connecting to Rome, and extended the trip, that's when we decided to pay.

Mr Mittelstaedt wrote what he wrote. All I can tell you is the rationale for what was done. I didn't file expense claims in Paris. The government didn't pay.

When you started accosting me earlier, your claim was about charging the government inappropriately. Coulter Osborne reviewed them and suggested a number of them shouldn't be repaid. Now I don't file expenses, you don't have claims and I'm supposed to stand up here and defend the fact that I didn't spend any money. This is what is Felliniesque about this place.

Mr Kormos: Scotland; London, England; Paris, France; Rome, Italy; the Spanish steps; the Trevi fountain—a week of leisure. And while electricity consumers in this province are paying skyrocketing prices, OPG subsidizes your junket to the tune of \$5,000 to \$10,000. Your staff person says that OPG paid for but one week of van in Paris. Five to ten Gs buys a whole lot more, even in Paris, than the rental of a van for a week. You've accused Mittelstaedt of lying. You called him a prevaricator. You were very clear about that. You indicate that he's prevaricating not just once or twice, but thrice.

Somebody's not telling the truth. Minister, if you're interested in the determination as to what is the truth, will you stand aside so that this matter can be inquired into?

1450

Hon Mr Stockwell: There were 12 meetings in 14 days on that trip. I met with a significant number of agencies and groups in Europe, in Rome and Paris. The

meetings took place at the behest of OPG. I can tell you that OPG paid for ground transportation and only ground transportation. I charged not a meal, not a drink, not a muffin, not an orange juice to the taxpayers of the province of Ontario—nothing. The fact is simply this: if there is anything inappropriate about this, I'd like to hear from Justice Coulter Osborne.

I will be very frank with you. You hold Mr Mittelstaedt in high esteem; I don't. I hold Justice Coulter Osborne to a far higher level of impartiality and believability. My suggestion to you is that we see what the Honourable Justice Coulter Osborne, who was the second-highest presiding officer of the Court of Appeal in this province, has to say, because if it came to Mittelstaedt or Osborne, I'd pick Osborne.

IPPERWASH PROVINCIAL PARK

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): My question is to the Deputy Premier. It has to do with the situation at Ipperwash that demands a public inquiry.

There is strong evidence of inappropriate political involvement in what should have been a police matter, and the political involvement includes the then Premier. The George family launched a civil case because the government consistently refused to call a public inquiry. Now the George family has said they would drop the civil case and avoid a three-month trial if the government would call a public inquiry. Recognizing the seriousness of this issue—that is, political involvement at the most senior level of the province of Ontario in a policing operation—and recognizing that the George family have agreed that they would drop the civil case if a public inquiry is called, will you, Deputy, today agree to call a public inquiry?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Deputy Premier, Minister of Education): I will refer the question from the honourable member to the Attorney General.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): As the member opposite knows, there are outstanding civil matters in front of the courts at this time. We have done everything to bring those matters forward. The subjects that are being considered in the civil action would be the same that would be considered in a public inquiry. The trial is set to begin on September 8, not too far in the distant future, and therefore I think that it's incumbent on us to allow that court to go through its process. A decision with regard to a public inquiry can be made after that.

Mr Phillips: I would just say to the public: this is a matter of extreme seriousness; evidence of the Premier saying on the day of the shooting that he wanted the occupiers out of the park within 24 hours; the police saying, "That's not what we want. We want more time."

Nothing could be more serious than a charge of political involvement by the Premier with the police. The George family don't want this civil case. Yes, you've done everything you can. You spent \$3 million of taxpayer money fighting the George family, and we will see

another \$2 million—the former Premier himself, over \$1 million of taxpayer money, fighting the George family. The government lawyers called poor Sam George "a terrorist" at these civil cases. The family has said, "We will drop the civil case," but they want assurance that you will call a public inquiry. They've got absolutely no faith in your government calling the public inquiry, because for eight years you have refused to do it.

I say to you again, Attorney General, this is a travesty and an attack on a family. The government should be doing the decent thing and calling a public inquiry. I say again to you, will you do the decent thing today? Will you agree finally to call an appropriate public inquiry so that the people of Ontario can find the truth about what happened at Ipperwash?

Hon Mr Sterling: We too are concerned, and feel for the Dudley George family as well.

As I mentioned before in my previous response, this matter is close to coming to trial. During that process the Dudley George family have had the opportunity to examine the evidence, some of which is not characterized by the statements made by my colleague opposite. But we will let the trial occur, and then, of course, a public inquiry can take place.

SARS

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): My question is for the Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. There have been a great many heroes during the SARS outbreak—nurses, doctors and public health officials, to name but a few—who have worked tirelessly, night and day, to protect the health of the people of Toronto, but there have been many unsung heroes as well.

Will the minister please inform the House about the important role that the Toronto-area community care access centres have played during the SARS outbreak?

Hon Dan Newman (Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I'd like to thank the hard-working member for Waterloo-Wellington for his question today.

The member is absolutely correct. The Toronto-area CCACs continue to play an important role in helping us to deal with the impact of the SARS outbreak. The staffs of these community care access centres deserve our thanks for their dedication and hard work during this difficult time.

CCACs helped us alleviate pressure on our hospital system by coordinating patient transfers and discharges, so that we could reopen emergency rooms and restart surgeries. They also monitored hospitals and helped to develop screening protocols for the community and home care sectors.

They are instrumental in our response to this outbreak and should be recognized for their contributions.

Mr Arnott: I think we're all very pleased to hear that the community care access centres are making such a profound difference for so many people, in light of the

SARS problem. I personally know how dedicated and hard-working the CCAC professionals are, and the staffs of the Waterloo and Wellington-Dufferin CCACs at home are outstanding examples.

I'd like to ask the associate minister what kind of contributions CCACs outside the GTA have made in the effort to contain the spread of SARS.

Hon Mr Newman: CCACs across Ontario have undertaken a number of measures to ensure the health and safety of those who are receiving health care at home as well as those in long-term-care facilities. In fact, across Ontario, CCACs are closely monitoring the status and the categories of hospitals affected by SARS and are working out plans for patient transfers and discharges accordingly. CCACs are also establishing the extent of screening protocols for caregivers, staff, clients and visitors, depending on their region. They're all working hard to ensure that those needing a transfer to a long-term-care facility get one of their top choices and get that choice as quickly as possible.

I'm proud to say that the Ernie Eves government is committed to helping to provide even better home care across Ontario through record investments in this sector.

I once again want to thank our home care professionals for all their hard work and dedication.

HEALTHY FUTURES PROGRAM

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): My question is for the Minister of Agriculture. The Ontario Federation of Agriculture's provincially funded program paid 67% of the cost to upgrade wells and protect groundwater from surface water contamination. The program started as a result of the tragedy at Walkerton, to provide financial assistance for well decommissioning or upgrading.

Well, surprise, surprise: the funding has run dry and waiting lists for this program are getting longer and longer.

Minister, you've been called upon to allow the transfer of funds from the decommissioning fund into the upgrade fund to deal with the immediate needs for well upgrades. The funding ran dry weeks ago, and rural Ontarians are waiting for this government to wake up and act.

Will you act immediately and allow the transfer of funds, so that rural Ontarians can make the necessary upgrades? Will you also commit to inject the additional funds necessary, so that all of us in rural Ontario can ensure safe, clean drinking water for our families?

Hon Helen Johns (Minister of Agriculture and Food): I'm happy to talk about healthy futures for Ontario agriculture. Healthy futures was one of the programs designed by this government, under a previous minister. It's a \$90-million program that was designed to enhance and promote responsible production, processing and distribution systems in the agri-food industry. It has been a great success. Over time, we have invested in a wide range of products to ensure that rural Ontario has the opportunities to ensure we have a healthy future for our young people and for our environment in those areas.

We've had over 300 applications. The system is now closed; the dollars have been spent. We had 119 projects that have been approved. The value of these projects is really insurmountable when you think about the benefits they have given rural Ontario.

We always have questions about reinvesting, and the government is looking at new programs all the time, which we might invest in.

1500

Mr Peters: Thank you, Minister, for the non-answer. I asked you something specific about one aspect of the healthy futures program.

Minister, it's been three years since Walkerton and your government continues to think it's acceptable to sit back and put the health of Ontarians at risk. Fifty-five per cent of the people who have had their wells tested have had results with some form of contamination, and estimates indicate as many as 100,000 wells will require decommissioning and upgrades in this province.

It's categorically unacceptable, three years after Walkerton, to have dirty drinking water in this province. I'm calling on you again, Minister, to not only act to allow the transfer of those funds to the upgrades, as you've been requested by individuals, but to inject a new round of funds with the dollars necessary to ensure that all rural Ontario has safe and clean drinking water for their families.

Minister, will you assure rural Ontario that you will act immediately, today, and continue to expand this vital program for water in rural Ontario?

Hon Mrs Johns: Let me say, we have a lot of programs we're working on to strengthen the environment and the water in rural Ontario. We have nutrient management. In this government's budget, in the throne speech and in the campaign documents, we're very clear that we're going to invest in the environment in rural Ontario. We're very, very clear about that.

We're also clear, through the Ministry of the Environment, that we're going to work on source protection and many of the other recommendations that have come from Justice O'Connor's report. Those too will benefit rural Ontario.

The commitment, when it comes to water, when it comes to the environment, when it comes to rural Ontario, is second to none by this side of the House. Healthy futures, this particular program, was designed because the OFA and other groups put together envelopes that they wanted to have the dollars put to. We would like each group to spend in all of the envelopes that they requested of us in the early stages. That's our goal: to have best management practices look at all the aspects of the proposal and make sure that each—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I'm afraid the minister's time is up.

PHARMACISTS' DISPENSING FEES

Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington): My question is for the Minister of Health. Ontario pharmacists dispense almost \$2 billion worth of prescription drugs on the

Ontario Drug Benefit Formulary operated by the provincial government. For this professional service, pharmacists are paid \$6.47 per scrip. The problem is that that's been the same rate for the last 13 years in this province, save and except for a small period of time during the NDP social contract where they clawed that back by 20%.

In all areas, the cost of operating a pharmacy has grown in this province, and pharmacists have much greater overhead costs. In a letter from the then Minister of Health back in 2001, we gave the pharmacists the assurance, and I quote from the letter, "Negotiations on a dispensing fee increase will begin in March at your convenience."

Minister, that was 28 months ago. Could you please tell the House when we're going to recognize the professional fees that pharmacists deserve and not the ones they're coping with in this province?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I thank the honourable member from Burlington for the question. Indeed, his recitation of the history of this is quite accurate, in particular that under the NDP government's social contract days they actually reduced the dispensing fee, a reduction that we reversed in 1999, and of course we're moving further to address this issue as well.

The honourable member might be interested to know that I formed a joint working group last year between my ministry and the Ontario Pharmacists' Association. I asked them to come back to me with an action plan to identify their priority issues and recommendations in a broader sense, not just the dispensing fee but a broader sense about the role of pharmacists in our health care system.

I can tell you we're now acting on that report. On May 2, just last month, I met with the OPA and I mentioned their issues. I indicated that we are addressing these as soon as we possibly can.

Mr Jackson: Minister, the Ontario drug benefit plan is the fastest-growing expense in the government of Ontario. It actually rose by over 11% last year. It's the most expensive program that we offer in health.

For the past several years, drug manufacturers have been raising their prices beyond what is legislatively permitted. In recent years, most drug manufacturers have been insisting that pharmacists buy their drugs from a wholesaler and that they pay an extra upcharge of between 3% and 10%. Today there are over 200 drugs on the Ontario Drug Benefit Formulary that pharmacists dispense—they do not cover their actual costs of stocking them and taking care of them and putting them in their inventory.

The question I have for you is this. We have a regulation that says that the manufacturer of the product must continue to be able to supply the products at the drug benefit price in a quantity that is sufficient to meet the demands for the product. Why are we not enforcing this regulation in Ontario to make sure that pharmacists can dispense drugs without losing money?

Hon Mr Clement: As the honourable member knows, there are a number of different aspects to this, including the costs to the operator, the costs associated with the pharmaceutical industry, the costs to the pharmacist, and of course I'm sure the honourable member would agree with me that the cost to the taxpayer has got to be foremost in our minds as well.

I want to assure the honourable member that various ministries in the government, including the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, are actively engaged in discussions with the pharmaceutical industry on their roles and responsibilities. I can tell you, and this is probably unprecedented, that we actually had a pharmacist sitting on our drug strategy review committee with the purpose of getting the pharmacists' perspective there, not just that of the pharmacy industry but the pharmacists' perspective, on reviewing exactly how our system works, how we can improve it for the future, and how we can protect not only Ontarians but the various stakeholders that have a legitimate interest at play.

HOME CARE

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a question to the Minister of Health. Yesterday, Gloria Rohrbacher of Capreol was told by the Manitoulin-Sudbury CCAC that her 85-year-old mother's homemaking services were being cut off. She's not the only one. The CCAC is eliminating homemaking services for the vast majority of clients in Sudbury and Manitoulin and is not accepting new requests for help except in very limited circumstances. To add insult to injury, Gloria was given a list of local homemaking service providers where she must now buy services for her mom. The CCAC has said that increasing demands for care and limited financial resources led to this decision.

Minister, what are you going to do to ensure that seniors in Sudbury and Manitoulin get the homemaking services they need from the CCAC?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): To the associate minister.

Hon Dan Newman (Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Mr Speaker, I understand that the VON's Sudbury branch will be providing homemaking services for the full term of their contract with the Manitoulin-Sudbury Community Care Access Centre. I also understand that there were some contractual discussions between the community care access centre and the VON, but this is something that the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care does not get involved in. I can tell you that our government appreciates the work that is carried on by the Manitoulin-Sudbury Community Care Access Centre, as well as the VON, Sudbury branch.

Ms Martel: When it comes to community care access centres, if you don't get involved to protect seniors and services, who does? For goodness' sake. What a silly answer.

Minister, this woman got a letter in the mail saying her mom's homemaking services were going to be cut off as

of June 23, 2003. She was given a list of providers, VON included, and told she now must buy services from the VON and other local service providers. You know, Minister, that homemaking services allow seniors to stay in their homes as long as possible. It's much more cost-efficient for seniors to remain in their homes than it is for them to have to go into long-term-care facilities. Many seniors who need these services will not be able to afford to pay for them. So I ask you again, as the minister responsible for funding CCACs, what are you going to do to ensure that seniors in Sudbury and Manitoulin get the homemaking services they need without cost from the CCAC?

Hon Mr Newman: I say to you today, I'll put the record of our government with respect to home care up against the record of either the Liberals or the NDP any day. And I'll tell you this: our government has allocated almost \$1.7 billion toward home care and community care services in the year 2002-03, and nearly \$1.2 billion of that went to community care access centres for the very services the member talks about.

I can tell you that we have created a system in this province that does not have means testing for clients. There's no income testing. We also provide the broadest basket of services of all the provinces in Canada. I'm very proud of the home care record of this government.

MEMBER'S COMMENTS

Hon Brad Clark (Minister of Labour): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Earlier, I raised a point of order in the House during question period with respect to the member for St Paul's. I raised the point that he had, in essence, linked all of the ministers of the crown into a grand conspiracy. I ask for some assistance. Here's what the member stated:

"So my question is to you as a minister is—and it's not just with respect to OPG and Hydro One, but all government enterprise corporations not subject to freedom of information act requests—will the government release all expenses submitted through those corporations that involve a minister of the crown? Will you release—

"Interjections.

"Mr Bryant: All the ministers doth protest too much. You know very well that there are monies and expenses being funnelled through government enterprise corporations to avoid public disclosure. You know it."

Very clearly, Mr Speaker, he has made an allegation not just against me as a minister of the crown, but every minister of the crown in this place. Our families, our credibility is on the line. You need now, sir, to step in and state this is inappropriate.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I thank the member very much. I don't have copies. I also will say that Hansard will be available, and I'm sure the honourable member, if he has indeed said what is quoted, will, as always, rise in this House and withdraw it. Again, when we get into territories like this, I hope all members will be appropriate in what they say. I'm sure we'll get an

opportunity to review Hansard. I thank the minister for bringing it to our attention.

1510

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Pursuant to standing order 37(a), the member for Timmins-James Bay has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Northern Development and Mines concerning the Ontario Northland Railway. This matter will be debated today at 6 pm.

VISITORS

Hon Jim Flaherty (Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation): Mr Speaker, on a point of order: On a happier note, I'm sure members would like to welcome to the members' gallery my constituency assistant from Whitby-Ajax, Kim Glover; our co-op student, Jamie Millage; and our summer students, Julia Silbak and Chris Mackay.

PETITIONS

HOME CARE

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas well-managed and adequately funded home health care is a growing need in our community; and

"Whereas the provincial government has frozen community care access centre budgets, which has meant dramatic cuts to service agency funding and services to vulnerable citizens, as well as shortened visits by front-line workers; and

"Whereas these dramatic cuts, combined with the increased complexity of care for those who do qualify for home care, has led to an impossible cost burden to home care agencies; and

"Whereas the wages and benefits received by home care workers employed by home care agencies are well below the wages and benefits of workers doing comparable jobs in institutional settings; and

"Whereas front-line staff are also required to subsidize the home care program in our community by being responsible for paying for their own gas and for vehicle maintenance; and

"Whereas other CCACs and CCAC-funded agencies across the province compensate their staff between 29 cents and 42.7 cents per kilometre; and

"Whereas CCAC-funded agency staff in our own community are paid 26 cents a kilometre, with driving time considered 'hours worked';

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To act now to increase funding to the CCAC of Kingston, Frontenac, Lennox and Addington in order for it to adequately fund service agencies so they can fairly compensate front-line workers."

I will affix my signature to this petition because I am in full agreement.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): The petition I have is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. I received it some time ago. It's not quite as timely as it might be, but the general content is.

"Whereas the Eves government has increased the fees paid for by seniors and the most vulnerable living in long-term-care facilities by 15% or \$7.02 per diem effective August 1, 2002; and

"Whereas this fee increase will cost seniors and our most vulnerable more than \$200 a month; and

"Whereas this increase is 11.1% above the rent increase guidelines for tenants in the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas the increase in the government's own contribution to raise the level of long-term-care services this year is less than \$2 per resident per day; and

"Whereas according to the government's own funded study, Ontario ranks last amongst comparable jurisdictions in the amount of time provided to a resident for nursing and personal care; and

"Whereas the long-term-care funding partnership has been based on government accepting the responsibility to fund the care and services that residents need; and

"Whereas government needs to increase long-term-care operating funding by \$750 million over the next three years to raise the level of service for Ontario's long-term-care residents to at least those in Saskatchewan in 1999; and

"Whereas this province has been built by seniors who should be able to live out their lives with dignity, respect and in comfort in this province;

"We the undersigned petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Demand that Premier Eves reduce his 15% fee increase on seniors and the most vulnerable living in long-term-care facilities and increase provincial government support for nursing and personal care to adequate levels."

I affix my signature. I am in complete agreement.

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough-Rouge River): I've got a petition that reads like this:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Eves government has increased the fees paid for by seniors and the most vulnerable living in long-term-care facilities by 15% or \$7.02 per diem effective August 1, 2002; and

"Whereas this fee increase will cost seniors and our most vulnerable more than \$200 a month; and

"Whereas this increase is 11.1% above the rent increase guidelines for tenants in the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas the increase in the government's own contribution to raise the level of long-term-care services this year is less than \$2 per resident per day; and

"Whereas according to the government's own funded study, Ontario ranks last amongst comparable jurisdictions in the amount of time provided to a resident for nursing and personal care; and

"Whereas the long-term-care funding partnership has been based on government accepting the responsibility to fund the care and services that residents need; and

"Whereas government needs to increase long-term-care operating funding by \$750 million over the next three years to raise the level of service for Ontario's long-term-care residents to those in Saskatchewan in 1999; and

"Whereas this province has been built by seniors who should be able to live out their lives with dignity, respect and in comfort in this province;

"We the undersigned petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Demand that Premier Eves reduce his 15% fee increase on seniors and the most vulnerable living in long-term-care facilities and increase provincial government support for nursing and personal care to adequate levels."

I am going to give Timothy this, with my signature affixed, to give it to the desk. I am in full agreement with this.

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Eves government has increased the fees paid for by seniors and the most vulnerable living in long-term-care facilities by 15% over three years, or \$3.02 per diem in the first year and \$2 in the second year and \$2 in the third year, effective September 1, 2002;

"Whereas this fee increase will cost seniors and our most vulnerable more than \$200 a month after three years;

"Whereas this increase is above the rent increase guidelines for tenants in the province of Ontario for 2002;

"Whereas, according to the government's own funded study, Ontario will still rank last amongst comparable jurisdictions in the amount of time provided to a resident for nursing and personal care; and

"Whereas the long-term-care funding partnership has been based on government accepting the responsibility to fund the care and services that residents need;

"Whereas the government needs to increase long-term-care operating funding by \$750 million over the next three years to raise the level of service for Ontario's long-term-care residents to those in Saskatchewan in 1999; and

"Whereas this province has been built by seniors who should be able to live their lives with dignity, respect and in comfort in this province;

"We the undersigned petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Demand that Premier Eves reduce the 15% increase over three years in accommodation costs to no more than the cost-of-living increase annually and that the provincial government provide adequate funding for nursing and personal care to a level that is at least at the average standard for nursing and personal care in those 10 jurisdictions included in the government's own study."

I will affix my signature to this petition, because I am in full agreement.

1520

ALUMINUM SMELTER

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): This petition reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario,

"Regarding cleanup of the abandoned smelter site in Georgina:

"Whereas the abandoned aluminum smelter located on Warden Avenue in the town of Georgina has been deemed to have heavy metals exceeding Ministry of the Environment guidelines; and

"Whereas the site is adjacent to a wetland that leads to the Maskinonge River feeding into Lake Simcoe;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the Ministry of the Environment to conduct a full environmental assessment of this site, followed by a cleanup of the full smelter site."

I affix my name. I am in agreement with this petition.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough-Rouge River): I have a petition that was sent to me, which I'd like to read to the House.

"Whereas the Eves government has increased the fees paid for by seniors and the most vulnerable living in long-term-care facilities by 15% or \$7.02 per diem effective August 1, 2002; and

"Whereas this fee increase will cost seniors and our most vulnerable more than \$200 a month; and

"Whereas this increase is 11.1% above the rent increase guidelines for tenants in the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas the increase in the government's own contribution to raise the level of long-term-care services this year is less than \$2 per resident per day; and

"Whereas according to the government's own funded study, Ontario ranks last amongst comparable jurisdictions in the amount of time provided to a resident for nursing and personal care; and

"Whereas the long-term-care funding partnership has been based on government accepting the responsibility to fund the care and services that residents need; and

"Whereas government needs to increase long-term-care operating funding by \$750 million over the next three years to raise the level of service for Ontario's long-term-care residents to those in Saskatchewan in 1999; and

"Whereas this province has been built by seniors who should be able to live out their lives with dignity, respect and in comfort in this province;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Demand that Premier Eves reduce his 15% fee increase on seniors and the most vulnerable living in long-term-care facilities and increase provincial government support for nursing and personal care to adequate levels."

I will give Sabrina this to take to the table. I endorse this in full agreement.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): By the way, I forgot to announce that you are the member for Scarborough-Rouge River.

Mr Curling: The great riding of Scarborough-Rouge River, Mr Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Absolutely.

HOME CARE

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas well-managed and adequately funded home health care is a growing need in our community; and

"Whereas the provincial government has frozen community care access centre budgets, which has meant dramatic cuts to service agency funding and services to vulnerable citizens, as well as shortened visits by front-line workers; and

"Whereas these dramatic cuts, combined with the increased complexity of care for those who do qualify for home care, has led to an impossible cost burden to home care agencies; and

"Whereas the wages and benefits received by home care workers employed by home care agencies are well below the wages and benefits of workers doing comparable jobs in institutional settings; and

"Whereas front-line staff are also required to subsidize the home care program in our community by being responsible for paying for their own gas and for vehicle maintenance; and

"Whereas other CCACs and CCAC-funded agencies across the province compensate their staff between 29 cents and 42.7 cents per kilometre; and

"Whereas CCAC-funded agency staff in our own community are paid 26 cents per kilometre, with driving time considered 'hours worked';

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To act now to increase funding to the CCAC of Kingston, Frontenac, Lennox and Addington in order for it to adequately fund service agencies so they can fairly compensate front-line workers."

I will affix my signature to this petition, as I am in full agreement.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough-Rouge River): These petitions are coming in by the hundreds. It reads like this:

"Whereas the Eves government has increased the fees paid for by seniors and the most vulnerable living in long-term-care facilities by 15% or \$7.02 per diem effective August 1, 2002; and

"Whereas this fee increase will cost seniors and our most vulnerable more than \$200 a month; and

"Whereas this increase is 11.1% above the rent increase guidelines for tenants in the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas the increase in the government's own contribution to raise the level of long-term-care services this year is less than \$2 per resident per day; and

"Whereas according to the government's own funded study, Ontario ranks last amongst comparable jurisdictions in the amount of time provided to a resident for nursing and personal care; and

"Whereas the long-term-care funding partnership has been based on government accepting the responsibility to fund the care and services that residents need; and

"Whereas government needs to increase long-term-care operating funding by \$750 million over the next three years to raise the level of service for Ontario's long-term-care residents to those in Saskatchewan in 1999; and

"Whereas this province has been built by seniors," as we know, "who should be able to live out their lives with dignity, respect and in comfort in this province;

"We the undersigned petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Demand that Premier Eves reduce his 15% fee increase on seniors and the most vulnerable living in long-term-care facilities and increase provincial government support for nursing and personal care to adequate levels."

I will give Ryan this to take to the desk. I affix my signature here. There are thousands, and lots of petitions are coming in daily. I, of course, endorse this and know the concerns they have for this government.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ONTARIO HOME PROPERTY
TAX RELIEF FOR SENIORS ACT, 2003LOI DE 2003 SUR L'ALLÈGEMENT
DE L'IMPÔT FONCIER RÉSIDENTIEL
POUR LES PERSONNES ÂGÉES
DE L'ONTARIO

Resuming the debate adjourned on June 2, 2003, on the motion for second reading of Bill 43, An Act to provide Ontario home property tax relief for seniors / Projet de loi 43, Loi prévoyant un allègement de l'impôt foncier résidentiel pour les personnes âgées de l'Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Everybody will remember where we left off. The member for Timmins-James Bay had just finished his debate, so we'll go into comments and questions in rotation, and I'm looking to my right. Comments and questions?

I'll go in rotation. Questions and comments? The Chair recognizes the member for Toronto Centre-Rosedale.

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): As always, the member for Timmins-James Bay did an excellent job of making his presentation with passion on behalf of the constituents he represents. I think he went out of his way to highlight the fact that this piece of legislation that is currently before the House is—

Interjection.

Mr Smitherman: Yes, I don't want more than two minutes. Two minutes would be plenty.

This issue that is before the House is one more demonstration on the part of the government that they are prepared to distribute the very limited funds of the province of Ontario in ways that address the needs of the wealthy at the expense of the needs of those who are not so wealthy.

My riding stands as an interesting example of a place where this disproportionate approach to public policy creates some pretty extraordinary circumstances. I'm an MPP who represents a riding that's home to many of our country's richest and too many of our country's poorest. At a time when the government of Ontario has a \$2-billion debt—don't ask me; ask the Dominion Bond Rating Service or Standard and Poor's or the Toronto Dominion Bank—they find money for some of our society's most affluent folks.

I have the honour of representing people who have done well, and their contribution is something that I support. But I think many of them would stand alongside me and say that, at a time when our public education system is starved of the kind of resources that produce the quality outcomes, that ensure the standard of life and living to which we've become accustomed, the precious resources of government shouldn't be distributed in such a way as to provide this kind of extraordinary tax relief to people who frankly are doing just fine without it.

The member for Timmins-James Bay has a pretty good record of being able to speak out on those issues and, with a commitment to justice, to make that presentation. I'm very pleased to offer these comments in response to his excellent speech.

1530

The Deputy Speaker: Comments and questions? Questions and comments?

The member for Timmins-James Bay has two minutes to respond.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): I'm standing.

The Deputy Speaker: I'm sorry. I have already gone past.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I'm sure the member from Hamilton was going to say some really

nice things about the presentation I made in regard to the seniors' tax credit.

I raised a number of issues, and I'm glad to see that members appreciated some of those comments.

Just to sum up, what I was trying to say was that when you look at this particular policy, you've really got to ask yourself where the government is coming from. If they wanted to put in place a policy that was truly there to assist seniors—and let's say all seniors; a generic or universal policy for seniors—they certainly would have found some way of being able to assist all of them in some sort of equal way.

What you've got now is, if you have a person who's a renter and happens to have a low income, who probably needs money more than a person who has a high income and owns a \$6-million mansion somewhere in Rosedale, you're going to have a really inadequate way of dealing with it, because the renter is probably going to get about 120 bucks a year by way of this rebate and somebody like Frank Stronach is going to get about \$27,000 on the rebate.

You say to yourself, "Well, the government has clearly chosen sides yet again." They've said, "We've got to pick between helping seniors who are on modest or low incomes and people like Frank Stronach," and other friends.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Conrad Black.

Mr Bisson: Conrad Black.

They've picked their friends and said, "We're clearly with Frank Stronach. We think Frank Stronach deserves yet another tax break. We think Frank Stronach should have more money in his pocket." This government says, "We don't like seniors who are on middle and low incomes, because we don't believe in universality when it comes to trying to assist them."

I'd probably have a little bit easier time trying to support this policy if the government truly tried to put together a universal policy that assists seniors or one that at least tries to assist those most in need. This is an inverted policy: rob from the poor and give to the rich, the story of this government.

The Deputy Speaker: In the members' gallery east I want to introduce Rita and Katrina Shaw, Natalie Prange, Lauren Schmultz and Daniel Worndl. They are visiting with page Brittany Shaw from Kitchener Centre. Welcome to our Legislature today.

Everybody will remember we're on Bill 43, and I'm looking for further debate.

Hon Carl DeFaria (Minister of Citizenship, minister responsible for seniors): I rise today to address second reading of Bill 43, the Ontario Home Property Tax Relief for Seniors Act, 2003.

My colleague the Minister of Finance introduced this bill on May 22. As minister responsible for seniors, I am proud of our government's commitment to seniors. I am proud that we are supporting their efforts to live safely and with dignity and independence for as long as possible.

This bill is an important part of that commitment. Bill 43 is consistent with our many initiatives to ensure the health and well-being of Ontario's 1.5 million seniors. It is consistent with our introduction last week of legislation to eliminate mandatory retirement.

Seniors should have the right to choose to work past the age of 65 if they wish. That was an historic piece of legislation, long overdue, that we responded to to ensure our seniors will be given the choice and the dignity to keep working if they so wish.

Bill 43, the bill we are debating today, is also consistent with our strategies to combat elder abuse and support new ways to address Alzheimer's disease. It is consistent with our \$1.2-billion, multi-year investment in long-term care here in Ontario. We want to ensure seniors can access the health services they need.

Seniors have contributed to the growth and prosperity of Ontario. They are our community leaders, workers, business people, mentors and taxpayers. Through Bill 43, our government is saying to seniors, "We value your contributions. We believe you should share in the prosperity you have helped to create." How fitting that we are debating this legislation in June, Seniors' Month. It is a good time to show our appreciation to seniors for helping to build this province.

Bill 43, the Ontario Home Property Tax Relief for Seniors Act, proposes to eliminate residential education property tax paid by seniors who rent or own their homes. It applies not only to seniors who own their homes, but also to seniors who are renting their homes. If passed, the act would provide \$450 million, almost half a billion dollars, in benefits for seniors in 2004. About 945,000, almost a million, senior households would each save an average of \$475 per year. If the House passes this legislation, it would go a long way to helping seniors afford to stay in their own homes.

Once passed, we would implement residential education property tax relief in two stages. The first stage would start July 1, 2003, less than a month from today, and go to the end of the year. Seniors would be reimbursed for the education property tax paid on their principal residence for that half of the year. Then for 2004, and each year after, seniors would get back the full amount of the annual residential education property tax they paid. This is a tax credit that senior homeowners and renters would have to apply for if the legislation passes. Applying for it would be optional, but we would encourage every eligible senior to take advantage of this tax relief. Pending the Legislature's approval, our government would process the first set of applications and send out the first set of payments to seniors by December 2003.

The proposed Ontario home property tax relief for seniors program has been designed to be simple. It recognizes that many seniors rely on fixed incomes that are being eaten up by rising property taxes. It aims to provide education property tax relief to all eligible seniors, regardless of their income.

There is considerable support for the residential education property tax relief among Ontario seniors. United

Senior Citizens of Ontario represents approximately 300,000 seniors and over 800 seniors' clubs throughout this province. Over the past years, United Senior Citizens of Ontario has passed resolutions at their annual conferences asking the government to take this step that we are taking at this time in this Legislature. Also, the Canadian Snowbird Association has endorsed this government action that helps and supports seniors.

These are two major seniors' organizations that really consult with their membership, the seniors of this great province of Ontario. I am pleased that through this bill we are addressing the call of so many seniors for relief from this part of their property tax.

1540

Seniors have worked all their lives and have paid taxes throughout their lives, and they still pay taxes and will continue to pay taxes. This is a small relief that our government has decided to provide our seniors. I can tell you that I have met with seniors across this province, and one of the main things I hear is that they live in their homes and don't want to abandon their homes to go to a small apartment, because they are familiar with their surroundings. Because of the fact that property taxes keep going up in their communities, they felt that being on fixed incomes, this is something the government owed them and should do for them.

I also want to point out that, if passed, this measure will not affect funding for Ontario's educational system. Because of the misinformation that the opposition has put out, many seniors believe that by applying for this tax credit, they would be taking money away from the education system. This fearmongering takes seniors on a guilt trip, and it's so unfair for the opposition to put out that information—

Hon David Turnbull (Associate Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation): But it's typical.

Hon Mr DeFaria: "It is typical," my colleague beside me says. It is typical of the opposition, with every measure the government takes for the well-being of Ontarians, to misinform people about what the measure means and where the funding will be coming from.

We applaud our seniors' concerns about their grandchildren's education. However, let me assure all concerned seniors, all Ontarians and all my colleagues here in this House that the proposed seniors' property tax relief will not diminish our government's commitment to public education in any way.

I ask my colleagues to think about this bill. I know they are opposing it on the other side; I know the opposition already has voted against this bill at first reading. I just ask that they keep informing people of the real facts about this bill. This bill will not be taking any funding from our children's education system. In fact, in the 2003 budget we announced a record \$15.3 billion in funding for the 2003-04 school year. This is the highest level of education funding in Ontario's history. It is an 18% increase since we took office in 1995. This funding promises a stable base for Ontario's schools over several years. We will continue to invest in education and im-

plement the recommendations of the Education Equality Task Force. Parents and grandparents can expect the education system to be focused where it needs to be: on improved student learning. Property tax relief is a practical way to help seniors secure their financial future and to help them remain in their own homes as long as possible.

I will briefly mention some of the other new and existing tax relief measures that benefit Ontario's seniors.

In the 2003 budget, our government announced that it would exempt life leases from the land transfer tax. More and more seniors are purchasing life leases for residences operated by charitable and non-profit groups. By introducing the land transfer tax exemption, we expect to provide an average saving of \$1,500 per unit.

The 2003 budget also proposed improving the tax credits used to support caregivers looking after elderly and dependent relatives. These improvements will be effective January 1, 2003. They will result in savings of about \$300 to caregivers and people with disabilities. Ontario's personal income tax credit for seniors on low to moderate income already provides them significant savings. Over \$500 million a year in savings and support go to Ontario's seniors and their families through personal income tax credits. I'm happy to say that when the proposed Ontario home property tax relief for seniors is added to other tax relief initiatives, Ontario's seniors would be saving \$2.5 billion in taxes per year.

Overall as a group, seniors are saving \$1.6 billion to date from Ontario tax cuts. That is a significant amount of savings for a significant part of our population, and a well-deserving group in our population.

As you see, Speaker, our government is serious about its vision of supporting Ontario's seniors. We are serious about helping them lead their lives with dignity and independence. We have been striving toward this vision since our government was first elected. We continue to aim for it as we plan for the needs of seniors now and in the future.

This is the right vision. This is the right thing to do. As I travel this province, as I speak to our seniors and veterans, I realize the contributions that they have made, and the wonderfully diverse province with some 200 different cultural communities speaking some 60 different languages living side by side, raising their families. Seniors from all different backgrounds built this province in a way that there is no place on earth better than this province of Ontario to live. The quality of life here is wonderful. The opportunities are here. I speak to people across this province. I know the opportunities that exist in Ontario. These opportunities would not be here if it were not for the seniors that helped build this great province.

As I mentioned before, June is Seniors' Month—a tradition we have celebrated in Ontario for more than 20 years. This year's theme is "Footsteps to Follow." That says it all. "Footsteps to Follow" recognizes that seniors are both teachers and role models for future generations.

Let me outline some of the other measures that, together with Bill 43, show our government's respect and

care for Ontario's seniors. We will provide \$10 million per year to give seniors better and faster access to cataract surgery. This investment will increase the number of non-hospital surgeries by 15,000 per year.

We will invest \$7 million per year to better prevent, manage and treat osteoporosis. This will benefit 530,000 Ontarians. I am sure my friend Mr Kormos will agree that this is good for Ontario's seniors and good for Ontario.

Our long-term-care investment plan is increasing annual long-term-care community services spending by \$551 million. This keeps Ontario as the leader in Canada in per capita spending on long-term-care community services.

Our 2003 budget announced an increase in spending on the Ontario drug benefit program, to a total of \$2.3 billion. A lot of our seniors call this program Ontario's crown jewel. The Ontario drug benefit program is unique, and the federal government does not help us with this program. This is an Ontario-made program. When you talk to people from the Snowbird Association, they'll tell you that people from other provinces such as British Columbia look at seniors in Ontario with a certain degree of jealousy of the quality that we provide not only to our seniors here but when they travel abroad. The plan provides access to about 3,200 prescription drugs.

Our government is also improving protection for vulnerable seniors. We have invested \$4.3 million in a strategy to combat elder abuse. This funding supports a partnership of my ministry with the Ministry of the Attorney General and the Ontario Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse. This elder abuse strategy has three priorities: to better coordinate community services; to train front-line staff from various sectors to deal with seniors; and to raise public awareness.

1550

We are moving well ahead with implementation of the elder abuse strategy. Eight regional coordinators plus a provincial coordinator and a training and education officer have been hired. They are out in communities across Ontario working with agencies in an effort to address the terrible problem of elder abuse. This is a worthy effort and a welcome effort, and we are proud of our role as a government in helping prevent elder abuse.

We also are taking steps to help protect seniors who live in retirement homes. We have provided \$1.2 million toward the crisis response and information service. The Ontario Residential Care Association, ORCA, operates this telephone service and it is available to all retirement home operators and residents and their families in Ontario. Telephone staff handle complaints and give information about service and accommodation options.

We have also launched a guide to programs and services for seniors in Ontario, on-line and in print. As I travel across the province, people praise us for this guide because it provides information not only about provincial services but also federal and local programs for seniors. We'll be translating this guide. We have it already translated into Chinese and we'll be translating it into

other languages as quickly as we can. This information helps seniors maintain their quality of life and participate in programs across the province.

We sponsor Ontario seniors' seminars on topics such as safe medication use, safe driving, avoiding frauds and scams, and advanced care planning. These seminars are developed, again, with our partners, the Ontario Pharmacists' Association, the Canadian Automobile Association and the Ontario Securities Commission. These seminars help Ontario seniors live healthier, more active and safer lives.

My caucus colleague will speak more on some of these issues. Our government brings a common message that Ontario seniors deserve all that we can provide. Seniors have worked hard all their lives to help bring this province to the point in our history where we have a strong economy and a vibrant society. I ask the members of this House to put partisanship aside and support this legislation. I ask the opposition to change their mind and support this legislation for our seniors.

The Deputy Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): We will not change our minds, because we've got some information we want the seniors of Ontario to understand loudly and clearly. What a defensive position this government is now taking.

Welcome to the show: 115,000 of our senior citizens kicked off home care by this government last year alone; 115,000 people cannot get the help to stay in their homes because this government kicked them off by not providing CCACs with the funding to do that. Shame on you for that. A 15% increase in long-term-care residential co-payments for the residents—what a bunch of claptrap they're trying to sell the people of Ontario.

The people of Ontario know the game that you're playing. The children of the senior citizens in Ontario know the game that you're playing: \$4.49 a day for meals for our senior citizens in long-term-care facilities; co-payments for drugs. The math wizards who are playing over there—\$475 they're going to try to tell everybody they're going to get in their cheques. Why don't you tell us about Ted Rogers, who's going to get \$18,425 with this bill? Or how about Isabel Bassett, who's going to get over \$7,000 in this little tax scheme they've got going on?

I can't believe that this government is standing up and now professing from on high that it's going to take care of the senior citizens when 115,000 of our senior citizens have been kicked off home care in their very homes.

This government is standing up and saying that it's going to take care of and that it loves the senior citizens. Do you know why? It's in a defensive mode right now. It's defending itself so that it can stand up—and very few of those words are talking about this particular bill.

Shame on this government for treating our senior citizens like that. A 15% increase in copayments for our long-term-care residents—they will remember.

I will also tell you something else: \$4.49 a day for meals is not acceptable in this province, and I'll speak loud and clear about it.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I have no idea what the member for Brant is talking about when he says that Isabel Bassett is going to get a \$7,000 kickback. That's just the guest house. You're not looking at the mansion. The mansion is going to get her a good \$15,000 or \$20,000 kickback from this government.

I like the minister. He's a nice person. I've met his kids. He has nice kids. They're bright kids. They're going to do very well—I hope. It's a good thing he's making a ministerial salary, because you have to make at least that much money if your kids are going to be able to go to college or university. You see, Minister, notwithstanding that I like you—and I do like you—and that you're paid a whole lot of money to make these speeches which are written for you—and they are—

Interjections.

Mr Kormos: Folks, please, I'm speaking with praise of a colleague for whom I have affection and whose kids I like.

I understand why he reads this stuff: because he's paid a whole lot of money to do it. He needs that money because he has three kids now in college and university, so he has no choice but to read the kind of speeches you just heard. It's not to imply that he necessarily believes it, but he has to read it, because that's what he's paid the money to do. He needs the cheese, the fromage, the dough, because he has three kids in college and university.

The problem is that there are a whole lot of senior citizens out there whose grandkids, to their great shame and regret, will never get into college and university because their dads don't make the kind of money Mr DeFaria does. Mr DeFaria is in the top 2% of income earners in the province. There are a whole lot of grandparents out there who are worried that their grandkids won't be able to go to college and university like Mr DeFaria's because their dads don't make the big bucks Mr DeFaria does.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It's indeed my pleasure to respond to the member from Mississauga East, who is also the Minister of Citizenship as well as the minister responsible for seniors. I know the passion he brings to this topic. That's why he's here on Thursday afternoon relentlessly listening to seniors and the voice of seniors. I'm here to support him because I am, arguably, one of those seniors, moving forward.

Bill 43 does a lot of things, and I'll tell you one of the things it does. People listening might appreciate this. The province of Ontario sets the education portion of the residential property tax, and the rate they set is uniform across the province. It's 0.335 cents on the assessment. That's about \$335 on a home of \$100,000, and you can do the numbers if your home is worth more than that.

What it's saying is that people whose assessment has risen—and it's my understanding that the assessment has risen, on average, about 10% to 15%—it's giving them some relief, because, for the most part, seniors are on fixed incomes.

I understand fully that the Liberals have voted against every single measure of tax relief for seniors. I expect

that they will increase taxes. In fact, there was an extremely good article this morning that I'd recommend viewers should read, and that is in the National Post—I'll send you a copy if you contact my constituency office—called, "Mr McGuinty's \$4.6B Solution." Read the article, and you'll know the Liberals will tax you to death.

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough-Rouge River): I wasn't going to really comment on the minister's statement here, but I was moved by the fact that my colleague from the New Democratic Party stated the passion that he brought to this issue—no doubt at all; I saw the passion. I saw that he really believed that it's seniors who are the founding fathers, with all their contributions as role models of this province. I commend him for that.

1600

I also understand, as the member of the New Democratic Party Mr Kormos stated, that, sure, he's well paid to carry that message. If he could have carried that same passion this morning, when the Dudley George Ipperwash issue was brought forward, I would have said to myself, "That's genuine. It's consistent." But what happened? The same individuals, those people who need the support of the minister in the sense of human rights issues—it wasn't there. I wonder where the passion went. What window did that slip through?

We know that the seniors need support; of course they need that. My colleague spoke earlier about the support they need and the attack this government has made on seniors to date. They come in now and say, "Here we are. We're going to contribute some sort of fund to you. All is well."

I'm looking forward to making my contribution later on, at my time, when I will speak. I just hope to carry some consistency in this minister and I just hope, when it comes to other human rights issues like the seniors and the passion he puts in there, that he puts the same passion in what we would have done in regard to the Ipperwash case we heard today, and some of those human rights cases that have been neglected by this minister. We hope that you carry that passion and we wish you well in your endeavours.

The Deputy Speaker: Comments and questions?

Hon Frank Klees (Minister of Transportation): I am pleased to respond as well to the remarks made by my good friend the Minister of Citizenship. As part of that portfolio, I know the responsibility he has for seniors in this province is one he feels particularly honoured to shoulder, and he does so extremely well. He does so by having in the best interest the quality of life for seniors in this province.

What is so disappointing is when I hear the response of opposition members to this issue. The fact of the matter is the issue—

Mr Kormos: What's going on here? He's out of order. He's breaking the rules.

Hon Mr Klees: Excuse me, Speaker. You might want to speak to the member here.

The Deputy Speaker: My apologies. I made a terrible mistake. You were the fifth person to speak to this, so

I'm going to cut you off now. I realize I made a mistake. I'll give you an opportunity to finish in a few minutes.

In the meantime, I'm going to call on the Minister of Citizenship and minister responsible for seniors for his two-minute response.

Hon Mr DeFaria: I thank the members who have participated in the debate. But I'm surprised that the people on the other side really have not got it. I would like the opposition, the Liberals, to go and explain to a senior who is on a fixed income why it they are voting against that senior being able to get, on average, a \$475 tax rebate to be able to stay in their homes instead of having to move out. I would like them to go and explain to the seniors the real facts about this legislation, that 99% of seniors receiving this tax credit are people who need this help. They are people on fixed incomes. They are people who need this support.

They are not giving information that is correct—not like my colleague the member for Durham, who spoke very well, and of course my colleague the Minister of Transportation, who made some brief but excellent remarks.

All I ask of the opposition is to go and talk to the seniors in their neighbourhoods, to explain to them why they are voting; I understand they have indicated that they will revoke this tax credit for seniors. When they go door to door, I would like them to explain that to their seniors.

What the government is doing is responding to seniors who are on fixed incomes and, like I said, this legislation does exactly that. It is a small recognition of the fact that seniors in this province have worked all their lives, paid taxes and continue to pay taxes. So if they get a small break, I don't know why the opposition would not be supporting it.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Curling: I want to say it's a great opportunity to speak on this timely topic. This bill before us should be looked at in two ways. When this came up, I first said, "They're moving in the right direction," but the fact is, when I looked a little deeper, I realized what is happening here. As I said, we must look at it in two ways. On one hand, this government says it wants to help seniors and you heard how articulately he put that forward: "We want to really help the seniors of this province." Of course, they do deserve a tax break, which is everything to this government here. As soon as an issue comes about, give them a tax break. It's rampant down in the States now. A tax break will solve everything now. Of course, they will ignore other things.

On the other hand, I can't help but think there's something rather political about this bill. Its content and its context is cleverly linked with some sort of political agenda here. In general, we believe that seniors in Ontario deserve respect, deserve assistance for their long-term care. But they also deserve restitution, and I use the word "restitution" deliberately here, because let's look at what this government has done to its seniors and the environment they've lived in over the time they've been

around. Isn't this the same government that you will recall levied a \$2 tax, a fee on prescription drugs? Isn't this the same government that at that time was attacking seniors and saying they are the ones—not only seniors; anyone who wants a prescription drug has to pay \$2. I think the minister forgot that.

That was harsh. As we get older—Mr Speaker, you are far from being old, but I know that dependence on prescription drugs may be a way of life afterwards, and then your income is reduced. Many of the seniors out there don't have the kind of income you have. But they were forced. That government forced on to the seniors a \$2 prescription fee. That was pathetic.

Over 60,000 senior citizens and vulnerable people reside in more than 525 long-term-care facilities in Ontario. I want to say it again: 60,000 senior citizens, people who are quite vulnerable, reside in 525 long-term-care facilities. Statistics Canada predicts the number of individuals over 65 years of age will double in the next 50 years. Of course, I won't be around at that time, but the fact is we will be doubling that amount. Residents today are admitted at an older age with more complex needs. As I said, dependence on prescription drugs and on help is needed more as we get arthritis and get into difficult times of life.

Yet this government's record on seniors is pretty dim and disastrous. This is the government that reduced home care, forcing at least 115,000 frail and elderly out of their homes and into institutional care. This is the same government that comes in here so compassionate now, saying they're going to offer \$400 a year from their educational tax break, a government which forced them into institutional care. This is the same government that hiked nursing home fees by 15%. You'll recall I said that the income of those seniors does not increase as they get older. As a matter of fact, the cost of living erodes some of the disposable income they have. This government went ahead and increased the fees in those homes by 15%. Keep in mind, in the balance, that this government is now saying, "We're going to give you a break." In the meantime, over eight years they have been taking away, levying taxes on seniors. When it comes time for an election, they say, "We've got a plan. We're going to give you back \$400."

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I'm talking about the vulnerable people, not the high-income individuals who are making \$200,000 or who have big homes and are able to get a break on that. They would say to themselves, "We don't really need that kind of money." But if the government gives it to them, they will take it. Those people are not complaining. But those who are in need are saying, "They're going to give us back \$475 on average." That \$475 will not even replace the amount of money in the attack they have done to seniors in the past.

This is the same government that removed standards that made sure all nursing home residents received at least 2.25 hours—two and a quarter hours—of nursing care daily and three baths a week. Three baths a week—

that's what they were reduced to. Helpless, struggling seniors were reduced to that level, and this government today comes in and says, "We'll give you back your education tax," after they've reduced them and humiliated them.

They talk about how this will bring respect and dignity to our seniors. Is that the kind of dignity the minister talks about? Is it dignity that they can only have three baths a week? We're going to bring dignity back to the seniors by reducing their baths per week and increasing the cost for them in institutional homes by 15%? That's dignity. That's bringing dignity, all right.

You ask me and many of us to explain to the people outside that they are going to get \$475 and we're going to deny them. They've got a majority and they'll put this through anyhow. But I will explain to them that they took away their dignity and gave them \$475. Which would I want back? My dignity. You deprive me of some of the funds I am making by increasing the fees in those homes by 15% and reducing my baths. "Give me back my dignity and keep your money," is what I would say to them, and what many of them would say, because that's disgusting. We're speaking about the same people who helped build this nation, who helped make this a better place for all of us. And today this government has reduced them to that level.

This is a government that has neglected those people. They have allowed nursing homes to operate without licences or regular inspections, as reported by the Provincial Auditor. Is that the dignity you brought? You give back \$475 but put them in homes that are not even inspected, and say, "I must explain it to them at the door."

I will. I will tell them, "That's the government that took your dignity and wants to give you \$400." But I will not waste my time telling those who are getting the \$12,000 back, because they can look after themselves. I'll explain to those people whose doors I'll be knocking on: "They took away your dignity, and they want to give you \$475," and they're basically doing a wonderful thing.

So the passion these ministers speak about is misguided and confused, and somehow they have a lapse in their memory of what they have done to the seniors of this province. And then they said, "We think we have something kind of cute here. We think people will take it. Once we give them money, they'll forget what happened to them." They won't forget. These are people who are intelligent, people who have been through the trenches and people who have fought and made us who we are today. They would say, "Why are they treating us like that? Why today? Why, at the last moment, are they bringing out a bill that would say to us, 'We will give you some money?'" It's because they're insulting those individuals and saying they will forget. Of course they will take that money, because the money is deserving of them. They've taken away more than ever from them.

The government says it is putting \$200 million into long-term care this year. The reality is, they're only putting in \$160 million for capital funding and \$30 mil-

lion for operating. So that dance with lovely figures that they're showing out there, how much is going to get into the hands of those individuals to improve the dignity that you took away from them? Residents are putting in \$130 million, and the government is only putting in \$38 million to deal with the shortage of nursing staff in personal care. So you see, it is the people who are putting it back, not the government. Furthermore, this wonderful feeling that they have in giving back the people their own money is like they're doing them one of the greatest favours in the world. But they didn't talk about taking away their dignity when they were taxing them higher, or when they increased more user fees than any other government we've seen. So while they're talking about reducing taxes, they're socking it to those who are most vulnerable in society.

Why is that today that we have more homeless people while they brag about the economy? There are more homeless people sleeping on the roads under this government. A sad affair. They come and say how proud they are of bringing back dignity. Talk to those people in the streets and the seniors. The next time you're passing, Minister, just stoop down and say, "Aren't you happy that I brought you some dignity now?" Talk to those from whom you took away some of their support in welfare subsidies, who try to cope at the lower level of income, and say, "We've taken away your money but we're giving you back dignity." They couldn't pay their rent. They've had to cut out some of their food. Bringing back dignity.

This last time now, they're coming in this late hour of the evening, the late hour of their reign. They say, "We're going to give you \$475 to recoup all of that insult and abuse that we have laid on you." Remember the Common Sense Revolution? It was a revolution indeed. It really attacked the poor and the most vulnerable in our society. People will not forget that. They won't, because the fact is, while they were struggling to get ahead, there were ministers here who were insulting them daily. Some think they can just go and get dented tuna cans. Some were throwing syringes on their desk and demonstrating the fact that that's what the poor are all about. These are ministers. These are people who are being paid by the taxpayers. Those same people whom they were insulting were paying their salaries.

Bringing back dignity? They're going to bring back dignity to our seniors. They're going to bring back dignity because thousands of people have written daily to us. They talk about that, despite the recent increase, studies have revealed that Ontario still funds the lowest level of long-term care of any of the 11 other jurisdictions in the government-funded level of services. It's funny how their statistics find them praising one aspect, yet the people themselves are talking about how they have lost dignity and money under this. They've increased the fees for them to exist. On average, the government last year contributed \$7 to accommodation costs—the fact is they are about \$7.02 by the residents versus approximately \$2 by the government.

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In addition, in the areas of physiotherapy and audiology delisting, this government removed physiotherapy and audiology services from OHIP. This was a direct hit on the seniors. Bringing back dignity? You removed those services they need. They can maybe find other sources instead.

It is seniors who most often have broken bones, heart attacks and strokes. It is seniors who need regular hearing tests because their hearing is going, or sometimes gone. In the areas of long-term and community care, this government commissioned a study of long-term-care services in 11 jurisdictions. As I said, Ontario came last in this. Bringing back dignity? That's a lot of effort you over there have made. You've worked so hard over the eight years or nine years that we're running last in this thing.

We provide an average of a little over two hours of service per patient per day—2.4 hours of service per patient per day. The Tories have eliminated standard minimum hours of nursing care and baths per week, as I've mentioned before. They only get three baths. Bringing back dignity? I go crazy sometimes if I ever miss a bath. I can't imagine the seniors not getting this. And this government brought back dignity?

So this bill must be looked at it against the background I have just articulated.

After hurting seniors over many years, they now want to come and say, "Here is a little nugget you can go along with. You seniors, I also presume your minds are going, so you will forget." They won't forget. These are people who will not forget.

This is politics. This is not policy. This is cynical. It's not smart. We know who will benefit from all this. We know who will benefit: those who have the large homes, those who have the large incomes. They will benefit. But those whom this government has beaten up over the years, has reduced to many ways of trying to survive, will feel that they will be blessed by \$475 or so. The time has come when people will look at this Conservative Party, the Ernie Eves government, the Harris-Eves government, because this attack started way back and they're putting a clinch on it right now.

The Liberal Party under Dalton McGuinty will have some respect and will understand the abuse. We will roll back some of those abusive policies you've put in place. Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals are committed to bringing dignity, to returning dignity to our seniors, to making sure the services and the good work that brought us here today are maintained.

It is a sad day to see a rich province like this—I say rich province, but this government that says it is fiscally responsible has increased the debt over their time here and have more homeless on the streets, have seniors having fewer baths, have seniors having to pay more in institutional homes. They will find that this is not the government for them, that this is not the compassionate and dignity-returning government they talk about. This is not it. Because on that day, and thanks to democracy,

which they would have changed if they could have, when the election comes, the people have a choice.

I say to the minister and the members over there, when I get to the door, I can fully explain why we would vote against this, because this is a very cynical piece of policy that they brought in and are playing politics with. I have no way of feeling regret about that and bringing back real dignity to the seniors of this province.

The Deputy Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Bisson: To my good friend from Scarborough-Rouge River, I notice he's always on the floor. He's in the top two or three people who get a chance to speak around here. That's very good. I'm glad to see that he is as active here as I am, because I think it's important to participate in this place. I commend the member from Scarborough-Rouge River for his comments. I thought what he was saying was sort of the basis of what we're seeing as overall policy of the Conservative government.

It's simple. This government has choices to make. Over the last eight years they've constantly made choices that clearly showed whose side they're on. If you look at this legislation they say, "We have a choice of helping hard-working individuals who end up retiring and becoming seniors on pensions, low-income or middle-income pensioners, and providing them with much-needed assistance in their daily lives, or we can give the bulk of the money to those people who have lots of money." For example, the choice is between giving Frank Stronach and Conrad Black \$20,000 or \$30,000 in tax breaks on the education portion on their property tax or they can help seniors.

This government says, "We've chosen. We're clearly on the side of Frank Stronach and Conrad Black," Because Conservatives understand that those poor rich people need so much help. They need another tax break so they can afford to maybe have another trip on the yacht somewhere in the Mediterranean this winter. Maybe some of them were on the last flight of the Concorde as it landed in Paris. We know they're hard done by, and they need so much help in order to keep up that rich lifestyle.

New Democrats choose differently. We would have chosen to help those people who need the help the most. For that reason we won't support this legislation.

Hon Tina R. Molinari (Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I'm pleased to be able to join in this debate today. In response to the comments made by the member from Scarborough-Rouge River, I'm pleased to hear that he says Dalton McGuinty's Liberals are committed to bringing dignity. If that's the case, then I would assume that they would support this bill that gives seniors a tax break for the education portion of the taxes that they've been paying over so many years.

In the city of Vaughan we have a Vaughan council which, for some time, has been discussing the amount of money that seniors pay for taxes. At a recent council meeting in 1998, some of the councillors were expressing the need to help seniors with their tax bills. A Toronto

Star article, dated September 1, 1998, reported, "Councillors stressed their concern for the seniors facing tax increases." One of the councillors even said, "We'd better do something about this, or we are going to have huge tax increases for our senior citizens." Do you know which Vaughan councillor said that? It was Mario Racco, who is now the Liberal candidate in Thornhill.

Interjections.

Hon Mrs Molinari: Yes, that's true. In 1998, they felt that seniors were overtaxed. I know that they will be supporting this, because that's inconsistent if they wouldn't support it.

The seniors in the Thornhill community have contributed greatly. The seniors in this province have contributed greatly. On Mother's Day, I had the opportunity to visit a number of the seniors' residences in my riding, bringing potted flowers. They told me how much they appreciate a government that recognizes seniors in the province of Ontario. I'm pleased to say that we are that government.

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Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): I'm glad that the member from Thornhill mentioned the esteemed councillor from Vaughan, Mario Racco. He's probably the hardest-working councillor in Vaughan, and there are a lot of hard-working councillors there. Mario Racco is known as a people's councillor, a people's representative, who goes out of his way to help people. That's why I'm glad the member from Thornhill mentioned his name here. Mario Racco: remember that name. He'll probably be sitting in her seat pretty soon.

Anyway, I just want to remind the Conservatives on this side that what seniors are telling me is, "We don't trust this guy Ernie Eves. We don't trust him and we don't trust those Conservatives, because they promised us all these things. And what have we got?" Well, 105,000 seniors were cut off home care. That's what they got from the Conservatives. Hydro—you know, it's laughable what they're doing. Now they're running the hydro system on portable generators all over the province. And the bills seniors are paying—they say, "You're going to cut my taxes? Yeah, but look at the hydro bill I'm getting." Every month the hydro bill is going up a hundred bucks. Seniors say they can't turn on the lights, never mind the stove.

Then car insurance: this government's in charge of car insurance. Seniors' car insurance—Mr McKeagan on Roselawn Avenue in my ward, his car insurance has doubled. People can't get house insurance. One senior phoned me and said, "I can't get house insurance because they said I've got to take out the oil tank." Another senior phoned and said, "They say I've got to change the wiring in my house. I've lived in the house for 40 years," and now these insurance companies and the government sit by doing nothing as insurance rates are doubling.

So you're promising all these things on the eve of an election, desperately trying to buy votes with their own money. Seniors don't trust you, Conservatives. They don't trust Ernie Eves. They trust Mario Racco more than they trust you.

Interjections.

Mr Kormos: How am I to compete with this incredible heckling, Speaker? It puts me under pressure that I'm not accustomed to, but I'm trying to adapt.

Look, here we are. It's 4:30. I'm going to get to speak eventually. It's probably not going to be until around 5:30 that I'm going to be able to speak to this. It's going to be an hour. So I don't know, folks. I just took a look at the Toronto Star TV listings. Next is going to be a Conservative speaker, so you might as well watch Dr Phil or Oprah or whatever it is on another channel, and then it's a Liberal again, so you decide. But I'll be on around 5:30. I've got some things to say about seniors. I've got a whole lot to say about seniors, because I've got a whole lot of seniors down where I come from who aren't comforted at all by this and similar legislation coming from this government.

Why, just today Shelley Martel, the member from Nickel Belt, revealed that in her community—and other communities will follow—they've eliminated home-making services for seniors. They didn't reduce it; they eliminated it. Those are the sorts of things seniors need, our folks need, our grandparents need if they're going to be allowed to live out their senior years, their retirement years. This government wants to take away seniors' retirement years. This government goes to a nursing home—a nursing home—and tells those old folks, "Get out there and get to work." Lord, going to a nursing home and telling those folks to get out there and go to work. "Carry your own weight," that's what this government says to seniors. Seniors deserve far better than what you're giving them. They'll get it after the next election.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Scarborough-Rouge River has two minutes to reply.

Mr Curling: I really want to thank the members who participated and made comments, and some who strayed a bit on this. But let me tell you what the Liberals and Dalton McGuinty will do. First, we'll bring better home care so that seniors can remain independent in their homes and stay there longer. We'll roll back the Harris-Eves 15% nursing home fee hike to no more than the annual cost of living. This includes, of course, repaying seniors for the last year's increase. We will reinstate standards and properly inspected nursing homes. We'll also invest in more personal care for seniors who live in nursing homes.

It needs to be emphasized what we're talking about, as in some of the petitions that were done here. Ontario residents still get 45 minutes' less care daily than residents in Saskatchewan got in 1999; nine out of 10 require help to get dressed and to eat; eight out of 10 require help to move around; and six out of 10 suffer from dementia and related disorders. They need help.

We will invest in seniors' centres that provide social, recreational, educational and volunteer opportunities. That is about bringing dignity. I hope that as these members reassess themselves, those who wrote that policy will look at it and realize they're in the wrong place and say, "Why don't we support that?" We know

this government will push this thing through anyhow and it will pass. But this will never—it does not—address the kind of disservice and the disrespect you have done to seniors over the years unless you can change your ways. I don't think you will, not the ways, unless we change this government. Then we'll have respect and dignity for seniors.

Mr Kormos: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Is there a quorum?

The Deputy Speaker: Would you check and see if there is a quorum present?

Clerk at the Table (Ms Lisa Freedman): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk at the Table: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Further debate?

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): It is indeed a pleasure for me to—

Hon Doug Galt (Minister without Portfolio): Would you welcome Peter Kormos back to the House?

Mr Gill: Yes, I will welcome Mr Peter Kormos back into the House.

It's a great pleasure to rise today to speak about our government's commitment to supporting seniors in Bill 43, the Ontario Home Property Tax Relief for Seniors Act, 2003.

Members opposite might say that members of the government, or perhaps myself as the speaker, are in a conflict of interest. They might say that. They might say that I'm doing these things because my parents as seniors, their neighbours as seniors, their neighbours as seniors and people all over Ontario will benefit from this great piece of legislation. Of course they will ask why we're trying to help seniors. We are trying to help seniors because seniors have contributed so much that we can never repay them.

I was very pleased when this announcement was made in my riding, when Premier Ernie Eves was there in the great riding of Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale with my constituents Frank and Olive Russell. In the release of this policy, one of the reporters happened to ask Premier Eves, and happened to ask Frank Russell, how he feels about getting this rebate; doesn't he feel for the kids? One of the answers—before Frank could even speak, Olive, his dear wife, said that she feels seniors have made great contributions, and she's so right. Seniors have made great contributions to make sure Ontario is flourishing and the economy is booming.

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The Ontario Home Property Tax Relief for Seniors Act proposes to complete our government's commitment to reduce residential education property taxes through tax relief provided to our seniors across the province. This bill would enable eligible seniors to receive a refund of the residential education portion of the property tax they currently pay on their principal residence.

Let's be clear: providing seniors with this tax relief does not take money away from the public education

system, despite the fearmongering by the members opposite—and I'm not going to distinguish any of the them, because they're all the same, be they Liberals or NDP. They keep fearmongering that this tax is going to take money away from the education system. They're totally—if I can use the right word—incorrect.

I want to assure the House and the people at home that this government remains committed to ensuring adequate funding for our schools. Under the new funding system for public education, which has been in place since 1998, funding to school boards is based on student enrolment, not property taxes. Property taxes themselves have nothing to do with school funding. It has everything to do with how many kids are in the school, and based on that, the funding formula works.

In fact, we have made it even better. After Dr Rozanski's report, we have given an additional \$2 billion to our school system. I was very pleased the other day to be at the Peel Board of Education—the public school system as well as the Catholic school system—announcing one of the largest funding they've ever had: \$950 million to the public school board and \$650 to the Catholic school board, which is historical funding of \$1.5 billion, a substantial increase. It has nothing to do with the inflationary increase from year to year. This is a substantial increase over previous years.

It's important to keep in mind that this government, our government, Ernie Eves's government, has increased funding for education from \$12.9 billion in 1995 to \$15.3 billion in the 2003-04 school year. This amount is expected to increase to \$16.2 billion for the 2005-06 school year. As you will appreciate, this amount is much more than many of the other provinces' total budgets put together—many of the Atlantic provinces.

This is an increase in funding even though enrolment, as you know, is projected to decline. In addition, it represents more education spending than under any other government in the history of Ontario.

The other day, I had a healthy debate, I suppose, with one of the great teachers. The discussion got into class size. What is the ideal class size? Somebody thinks 1:1 is the ideal class size. I know that when I went to high school, and I'm very proud of that high school, Parkdale Collegiate, about 35 years ago, I think we had a class size of 30 or more.

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): Twenty-five years ago.

Mr Gill: Twenty-five years ago. You're right; I stand corrected. Thank you. Thirty or 35 students per class. It didn't do me any harm. I know that sometimes people say less is better. I'm not advocating larger class sizes; don't get me wrong. But there's no study that shows what the best class size is. We can have a debate on its own about how large class size should be. But I do recall, early in my studies at university—I think it was at Convocation Hall, because they couldn't find a room big enough—close to 2,000 students in one class. It didn't do me any harm.

Just as we have enhanced our commitment to education, I would like to turn the attention of this House once

again to our government's commitment to seniors. The 1.5 million seniors who live in this province have contributed enormously to our economic prosperity. Seniors have helped create an Ontario we can all be proud of. This government has worked hard to make Ontario the best place to live, work, invest, raise our families and then retire.

What we have accomplished is the direct result of this government's economic plan for prosperity. Our economic plan includes lower taxes. I think there is nothing wrong in saying that. I know that, in some of the parties' philosophy and mandate, "profit" is a bad word, but we have nothing against that. We think everybody should be able to work hard, flourish, make good money, pay fair taxes—not too many taxes—and make sure that a break is given to the people who deserve a break.

Our economic plan includes lower taxes, balanced budgets, reduced debt and prudent fiscal management. It is a plan that has created more than one million net new jobs since 1995. When we brought out our platform in 1994, people across the province, the pundits, the political scientists and even the so-called forensic accountants thought our numbers didn't add up, thought this did not make any sense. "How can you reduce taxes, create more jobs, have more money coming into government coffers, spend more money on health care and spend more money on education?" But we have proven that the system indeed works. Lower taxes create more jobs. We bring in more money. We can give more tax breaks.

I say it's a great cycle, and I'm very happy to say that the current election document, *The Road Ahead*, builds on those principles, recommitts our belief, our commitment to Ontario taxpayers that will continue on that very successful path of cutting taxes and spending more money on important areas like health care, education, seniors, more police, like having no teacher strikes from now on, hopefully.

The key to economic growth and an enhanced quality of life for seniors is prosperous, healthy and secure cities, towns and rural communities. In fact, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has increased health care spending from \$17.6 billion in 1995 to \$27.6 billion this year. What I can't understand is when the opposition fearmonger and say we have cut health care spending. I don't know where their math is, but I don't see, when you increase spending from \$17.6 billion to \$27.6 billion, where the cuts are. I don't see that.

But I am very proud to say that there is going to be a brand new hospital, the largest community-based hospital in Canada, coming to my great riding of Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale, 608 beds with all the specialties, which will attract a lot of research and a lot of new doctors. I'm looking forward, perhaps within the next year and a half, to being able to be at the opening. I would certainly invite you, Mr Speaker, to be at the opening for the ribbon-cutting. As we again form the next government, I'm sure people will be very happy that we are there to celebrate the progress and fulfilling our promises.

That hospital, which benefits not only seniors but everybody, has been a long time coming. People have seen the hospital location or the board, if you want to say, for the last 30 years. I will take as much credit as anybody that on my watch we have fulfilled that dream, I'm very pleased to say.

At the same time, there are two long-term-care facilities coming up in my riding. My riding is also divided into a couple of distinct communities: the community of Malton, which comes under the city of Mississauga, and the community of Bramalea, which comes under the municipality of Brampton. So we have a long-term-care facility in Malton and we have a long-term-care facility in Brampton.

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The other day, a member from the NDP said in a committee hearing, "We have too many long-term-care beds." I did not think I would be here the day when people say we have too many long-term-care beds. I'm so pleased to say that we have an adequate number of beds.

We need to do more. We need to work on homelessness, people who are on the streets, when they need help. The irony of the situation is that the shelters go empty while people sleep on the streets. When the task forces and teams see fit, that there is danger to these people's lives or health, we should be able to look after them and give them shelter.

We will provide about \$400 million to fund 20,000 new long-term-care beds all across Ontario. Some more examples of our investment in long-term-care facilities include the creation of 186 new and 184 developed long-term-care beds at the F.J. Davey facility in the beautiful town of Sault Ste Marie—you take a train from Sault Ste Marie to the Agawa Canyon, and it's beautiful; I encourage people to take advantage of that because it's great for tourism for that part of Ontario and it's a great trip—160 new long-term-care beds in Kingsville, 200 new long-term-care beds at the Yee Hong Centre in Markham.

Many members would have heard me talk last week about the Yee Hong Centre and the great golf tournament that we were going to host on May 30. I'm proud to say that the gods were kind to us and made sure that the weather was good, and we had a great tournament. We were able to raise slightly more than \$10,000 for the Yee Hong Centre long-term-care beds. So the cheque was presented to Dr Joseph Wong that very evening. They were quite thankful. What better way to have some fun than getting some friends together, getting sponsorships from corporations that are benefitting so much from our policies, and creating those funds for the good cause of long-term-care beds? That's precisely the subject of our discussion today: the facilities that are so much needed for the seniors and recognizing the efforts that the seniors have already made for this great society of ours.

We've also increased the number of MRIs in Ontario from 12 to 42, and we have approved another 10. We have established 16 regional and district stroke centres

since 2000, reduced the waiting time for cardiac surgery by 50% since 1996 and have undertaken more initiatives to protect the health and well-being of our seniors. We have addressed and provided increased support to assist seniors affected by eye disease, osteoporosis and dementia, common illnesses affecting seniors. We will increase spending for the Ontario drug program by \$2.3 billion, an increase of 132% since 1994-95.

The Ministry of Citizenship and the Ministry of the Attorney General have worked together with seniors' groups and other stakeholders to implement Canada's first provincial strategy to combat elder abuse. The Attorney General has committed \$4.3 million over five years for a victim's justice fund starting in 2002-03. Our elder abuse strategy will ensure that seniors can live with dignity, are treated with respect and are protected from abuse. The strategy focuses on three priorities: coordination of local services, training of front-line staff from various professions and public education to raise awareness of elder abuse.

There are other initiatives currently in place for Ontario seniors. Ontario's strategy for Alzheimer's disease and related dementias has a \$68.4-million, 10-point action plan to help meet the needs of Ontarians with Alzheimer's disease, their caregivers and their families. This strategy involves training for front-line staff and physicians, increasing public awareness and annual design conferences to explore innovative and secure environments for people with Alzheimer's disease.

The Alzheimer's disease action plan also provides for the expansion of respite care, services for caregivers, research on caregiver needs, promotes advance care planning, new psychogenic staff, coordinates specialized diagnoses and supports local dementia networks. The establishment of a research coalition and an inter-generational volunteer initiative is also taking place.

About \$1.2 million is being provided to the Ontario Residential Care Association to operate its complaints, response and information service, CRIS, for all retirement homes across Ontario. This service includes full-time staff to help seniors and their families resolve retirement home complaints and give seniors information about the full range of services and accommodation options.

We also offer Ontario senior seminars. These seminars were developed in partnership between the Ontario Seniors' Secretariat and organizations such as the Ontario Pharmacists' Association, the Canadian Automobile Association and the Ontario Securities Commission. These seminars specialize in the areas of safe medication use, safe driving, avoiding financial scams and advance care planning.

The Memory Project is a multi-year initiative of the Dominion Institute to connect veterans and students in classrooms across Ontario. Print and on-line resources are available for Ontario teachers and students to support veterans' classroom visits to tell their war experiences. I was quite pleased to host a television show, and one of the very senior veterans was there. We spoke to the kids

about these veterans' experiences and how proud we are of their contribution.

The Deputy Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Colle: The member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale failed to mention that there are over 65,000 people in the city of Toronto, most of them seniors, waiting for affordable housing that this government hasn't done anything about; 65,000 people waiting to live in decent accommodation that governments in Ontario, going back to Bill Davis, used to provide for seniors. I'm talking about the Metro Toronto Housing Co, fine buildings to live in with respect. They aren't built any more, therefore we've got seniors living a few inches away from being homeless.

What's their answer? He's proudly talking about the scoop law for the homeless. They're going to bring out a task force of who knows what to basically punish people who may be mentally ill, people who through no fault of their own are homeless. They're going to scoop them off their streets and do what with these poor people? Their answer is—I think it was Jim Flaherty who was saying, "We're going to be tough on the homeless people." Maybe you should provide some support, some housing for them so they don't become homeless.

They say, "We're going to give you all this money." The last eight years—seniors in Ontario all tell me they're worse off. They're paying more for hydro, more to heat their home. They're even paying for their medicine—they never paid for their medicine before—through user fees.

Hospitals: this government proudly boasts of it. Duncan Sinclair: do you remember him? He closed 30 hospitals. I've got two hospitals closed in my riding of Eglinton-Lawrence. They closed Branson and North-western emergencies. Seniors are saying, "What am I getting for my money? This government has closed hospitals, closed emergencies, no housing. Good for me? Good for them."

1700

Mr Bisson: I want to question the member, Mr Gill. I want to know where he stands on seniors who are driving in the cab industry. I got this invitation. It says, "On Tuesday, June 10, 2003, at 11 am, the taxi industry will be protesting the unfair treatment it has been getting from all levels of government. Mr Raminder Gill"—and I don't believe this—"has lied about the real purpose of Bill 2." They're coming over here to protest. I just want to know how he feels about the seniors who are over 65 who are in the cab industry and who feel they're getting a bad shake and want to know if Mr Gill is going to do anything about it.

It goes on to say, "He stated, 'Too bad'"—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I would ask you to withdraw the part that you cannot say indirectly and that I will not allow you to say directly. You can't do a quote that is that way.

Mr Bisson: I withdraw. I'm sorry. I was just reading it. I didn't mean to offend anybody.

I want to know from my good friend Mr Gill where he stands on the seniors in the cab industry and where he'll

stand on that protest. I'm going to join these gentlemen and ladies. I'm sure all seniors will be there on the 10th. I'll be there at 11 o'clock to see what their concerns are. I just want to know what your position is going to be with regard to these seniors in the cab industry.

I also want to say to the member across the way that your government has chosen. You guys are clearly picking sides. When it comes to helping, you had a choice: a universal policy that helps everyone, or a policy that helps Frank Stronach and some of the richest people in Ontario get more in their pockets, or one that helps seniors with lower incomes. As New Democrats, we would have chosen to help seniors with lower incomes. We might even have chosen a universal policy, but I think we probably would have chosen to go with the people on lower incomes. You guys helped Frank Stronach. You've helped all kinds of people at the upper echelons—

Mr Kormos: Galen Weston.

Mr Bisson: Yes, Galen Weston and all those people. We know it costs money to spend your winter in Monaco. Parking your yacht at a berth in Monaco is so expensive—

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Comments and questions?

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): I want to pick up on the comments from my colleague from Eglinton-Lawrence about this government's attitude toward the homeless. The member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton recites, as if suddenly this is the new religion, Mr Flaherty's policies. This is a desperate government. It was very appropriate, even though the member was off-topic, to bring up those kinds of things. The idea—talk to the police; talk to the workers. They don't want to be involved in rounding people out of snow banks. They do that now voluntarily. The question this member does not want to ask is, why is that the best option? Why does any homeless person live under bridges in Ernie Eves's Ontario?

When I see this crass appeal to seniors, I know seniors are going to be asking themselves a slightly different question: not "Who's putting money in my pocket?" but "Do I feel proud of the province I built up? Do I feel proud walking down Bay Street stepping over homeless people because nobody cared all these years? Do I feel proud there are double the number of people out there"—and not people, as the member inferred, unable to provide for themselves, with no better options. Frail people, yes; people without necessarily the strength to contend with a lot of things like disease, health and so forth; people who in the past lived lives of dignity. Many of them are approaching their senior years.

The government would say, just as they would in the proposal in the bill in front of us, that somehow they have a simplified solution. It would not do what I think the seniors of this province want in the province they helped to build. They want dignity for these people. They do not want a government that's not prepared to really understand what the prerequisites are of having those

people belong to society. Seniors know what it feels like to be alone, to be isolated, to feel like you don't matter, and they know that applies to homeless people as well. For the member opposite to stand up and toss off an insincere attempt to help folks, I think seniors will see through.

Mr Kormos: I think the members are being awfully hard on the member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale. I think they are. I think they're perhaps even being a bit unfair to him. Look, he's reading the government's spin. You've got to understand that here's a government very much in an election mode, pre-election election mode—they can't quite make up their minds about that—and what he's got to do is try to spin this stuff, and he's paid well to do it.

Again, I don't quarrel—look, Mr Gill has needs as well. He has to support himself. His wardrobe is an attractive, albeit expensive, one.

I know there's a price for people, but I've always remarked at how some people will compromise themselves for what is, in relative terms, a relatively low price.

Look, that's what New Democrats have been saying about the spin. Here's Tory spin and then there's Liberal spin and then there's Tory spin and Liberal spin. That's why New Democrats are committed to substance. That's why, as New Democrats enter into this election campaign—and don't kid yourselves; we're entering into one. It has to come sooner or later. The Tories only have one more year, and we're going to hear more and more of the Tory spin.

So don't be critical of Mr Gill for doing his job; he's paid to do it. This is his job: to read the scripts that are written for him by the Premier's office and by the \$1,000-a-day consultants and by the little pundits who hang out there behind the Speaker's chair. They're here monitoring him. There are eyes watching him.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale has two minutes to reply.

Mr Gill: I do want to thank the members who took part, even though they were all wrong: the member from Eglinton-Lawrence, the member from Timmins-James Bay, the member from Parkdale-High Park and the member from Niagara Centre—a good friend of mine, by the way. I thank him for trying to say good things about me.

I sometimes wonder about the member from Timmins-James Bay. As he flies around in his plane, he's talking about all these socialist activities. That's what he does. He has a plane, and more power to him.

He talked about Frank Stronach and Belinda Stronach. They have a great training facility in my riding, where they train the young people to become excellent mechanics and tool and die makers. Frank Stronach is, as you know, a first-generation immigrant. He did not come in with millions of dollars in his pocket. He came in to work hard. He didn't know much English, like me, but eventually he made a great life for himself. He's a great employer and he's a worldwide businessman, and I certainly welcome enterprising people like that. We

should not be talking about those people in a very derogatory language, as if they're at fault of some kind. They're great contributors.

The member from Eglinton-Lawrence talked about affordable housing. I know that the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing has announced an initiative which hopefully is going to relieve some of the problems. We don't have a magic solution. Some of these rent control policies that have been going on for years and years might be contributing to some of that. I think we should face that. We need to do more.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Kennedy: It is important to be talking about this particular bill because it was a pre-election initiative of the government. It probably was not meant to even be in the Legislature, being examined and looked at. As I understand it, it's unlikely to find its way to committee because the government still harbours some notion of taking it out on the road. It is perhaps the largest single bribe they have, in an electoral sense. It's something that appeals to people and something that might entice people.

I think the premise of this bill does deserve examining. So we are, again, grateful in a little way that the government has not been able to follow its apparent plan of having an election and not having things like this talked about in this House and looked at by the people of the province.

This is definitely an initiative that doesn't wear well with age. It really has that small-trinket allure. It sits there in the window and sparkles for a little while, but it is something that doesn't stand up to very much scrutiny. The tarnish and the baubly part of this becomes readily apparent.

We stand here in Seniors' Month to talk about seniors. We heard the minister, who's supposed to have a regard for seniors and how they're doing, promoting this. I guess this is the best the minister of seniors under a Conservative government thinks can be done for seniors. This certainly stands up against a whole range of things that haven't been done.

When we talk about the seniors in this province, we have to look at what they deserve, and we do have to talk about them as deserving some entitlement as people who have worked their entire lives and who have struggled through conditions that most people in this House, not having attained that age, are only somewhat familiar with. I speak for my generation. They took a lot for granted about people who have gone before. I believe that kind of feeling is what the government hoped for in speeding this thing through as a back-of-the-envelope election pledge. They would get people to see this as something to give back to our seniors. What could be wrong with that?

1710
Again, the premise is that somehow the government can afford to do this. We have heard from as reliable and austere financial sources as you can find that the government has a hole in its pocket. So when it's reaching in

and saying, "Here is something for you," ahead of the election, I think seniors in the province have probably become fairly conditioned to promises from any party, but particularly from this government as they've stepped through these last seven or eight years. They can be well advised that this government is going to have to give up something.

There is a \$5-billion risk factor, bigger than any budget of the provincial government and of comparable budgets anywhere else in the country in recent years. There just hasn't been this kind of construction that says that in order for the government to deliver this particular election bauble, they have to sell \$2.2 billion worth of something. Not one single item that the government is going to sell, and has to sell this year—I don't know if it's this piece of land; the Minister of Finance mentioned land the other day in estimates committee. What part of the heritage of this province would be sold for \$2.2 billion?

We know the past example, and it's a cautionary one. In order to afford stuff like this before the last election, the government sold Highway 407 for one price and then found out within a year that it was worth four times as much. And to get the money to go around and give away enticements to the province, they had to sell out all the users of the 407 for 99 years—unheard of. The most profitable toll highway anywhere in the world was a complete giveaway by the people opposite, supposedly portraying themselves as people with business acumen, and we've got international investors laughing their way to the bank at the way they've essentially been able to take advantage of our consumers, our citizens. So \$2.2 billion is missing.

There are \$700 million in cuts. What's going to be cut? In other words, to pay the \$450 million for this, part of the plan is to cut \$700 million somewhere else. Where? Will the minister responsible for seniors say which seniors' services are going to be cut to find \$700 million? Where is it?

On top of that, we understand there's another hole in the budget: about \$800 million for the cost of SARS. Where's that coming from? Where is the government going to provide for that? And built into the government's plan is \$770 million from the federal government, but it only happens if they run a surplus. It's not real money in the sense that you can absolutely count it. Most of the financial analysts out there don't count on it; a desperate government does.

A government with a \$5-million hole in its budget is offering a \$450-million bauble to the seniors of this province. The premise, I think, is that somehow that's the calculation and that's the way that seniors derive themselves. There certainly are seniors in this province who, despite the fact that they deserve better and have worked their way through their lives, count their pennies. The government opposite has spent some of those seniors' pennies by having focus groups with seniors.

What bothers seniors is that they don't like to pay for what they don't get. They've asked every member of this

House at one time or another, "Why do we pay education taxes if we don't have the benefits?" Why indeed, if the government opposite cancels seniors programs in Toronto, for example? They take over the Toronto board and cancel them. Thirty thousand seniors depended on that for their development.

This bill narrows the view of seniors. What kind of Ontario do they get to live in? Do they get to live in a province where they belong, where they're respected, where they deserve to be, or are they just votes to be bought at election time? If they belong, they deserve to be in those schools taking those courses and not hijacked for the prices. This government took it away from them, unceremoniously and with no consultation took those courses away from them in Toronto and elsewhere in the province and made it very difficult for them to have access to those kinds of resources. That's what they did in terms of their relationship, particularly with education.

But even going back further, one of the first things the government did was to add a charge on the drug benefit—and worse. First they added a charge, which causes concern and consternation. As they go through every new year, they have to pay the deductibles up front. It's a significant charge for people living on the margins. They are counting their pennies. But they remember that comes from this government that says it needed that money.

The seniors of this province, even though they were thrown into some extra level of hardship, didn't kick up that big a fuss. But you know what the government did the next year? It charged them twice. This government charged them twice for the same entitlement in terms of being able to pay their deductible. We in the opposition were able to get that \$30-million mugging of extra benefit from seniors restored. It took a little bit of doing, but we actually got the extra three months added back on. But it still remains that governments—the Harris government at the time, now the Harris-Eves government—picked the pockets of seniors really early on. Did they then make sure they saw the benefits? No. They have been promoting, up to this point, tax cuts that don't really touch seniors because they're outside of their high-earning years. That's who's been benefiting from the tax cuts. At that time, this government borrowed \$11 billion. We pay a million dollars a day in interest for the money they borrowed for their premature tax cuts of which seniors had almost no benefit whatsoever and in fact had to go into their own pockets to pay for. And there was Mr Harris's hand—Mr Eves's, actually, in his role as Treasurer—in their pockets, taking the money out for drug benefits.

What about the seniors in terms of what they want? It's not every senior who needs the health care and the things leading up to it, but certainly every senior has to be mindful of what would happen. A lot of them fought and sacrificed in years past, first to buy their health care, mortgage their homes, and then to get medicare happening here. They endowed that to us as their children. And what did we do in return? Cancelled 3,000 chronic-care beds—2,500 of them with seniors in them at the time—

where they got higher levels of care that maintained their dignity, that brought them rehabilitation, that gave them a chance to get back with their families and enjoy their lives. Where are they today? Many of them are warehoused in long-term-care facilities that can't meet those needs, 3,000 seniors, forgotten by this government, parked away, warehoused in no uncertain terms.

And that is where seniors like Ed Whitehill found themselves, in our general hospitals—Ed Whitehill, 85 years old, in Peterborough, a few years ago, his first time back in hospital in 40 years except for the fundraising he did to build up the civic hospital. And what did he find? He found himself the 15th or 16th person, lying on his back in the hallway, thanks to the policies of this government toward seniors and others who needed health care. What did those people in the hallway, looking up at the bright fluorescent lights, unable to get the attention they deserved, hear the next day? It was Mr Whitehill's daughter, yelling, "How long has my father been lying here, dead?" Mr Whitehill in Peterborough died. He died unattended, not because the nurses didn't care, not because the doctors weren't capable, but because the system would not deliver the dignity of a bed and a place in that particular hospital, because this government that year had cut \$600 million—\$600 million on top of an earlier cut of \$400 million away from the operating budgets of hospitals. They fired nurses to the tune of \$400 million.

And here we are. I know it's an anxiety for seniors in my riding, because I've heard from them. They want to know, "Can we have the nurses full-time?" They go to the emergency at St Joseph's hospital in west Toronto and they see that there are temporary nurses there. We now know the cost that that has: \$100, \$125 an hour this government is prepared to pay to companies to bring in nurses they can find somewhere but not to pay the price to have constant attention from nurses who are working full-time themselves.

That's the legacy this proposal is walking into. This is what you're proposing to seniors: "Take the money and run. Don't worry about those other services." That's what the government is saying to the people today. We find, as Mr Whitehill kind of found, and others, that there is this ageism that has now worked into our health system. This government, contented and comfortable itself, has forced the system to triage, and some of that, a subject that very few want to talk about, is a discrimination against older people unable to access the same services as younger people. If one member opposite believes that's not true, then they haven't visited their local hospitals and had a heart-to-heart with the kinds of decisions that have to be made in a system of rationing that's taking place in this province today.

1720

My local hospital, just like most of these members' hospitals, except if there has been an election visit—if there has been an election visit, then the hospital has got some money given to it in a big cheque. That other pre-election plan, I guess, went a little by the boards. But

many hospitals haven't had such a visit, and the hospitals that seniors depend on for their care don't know their budget for last year yet. The government has taken the system from when it used to tell hospitals the budget three months in advance so they could plan, hire nurses, plan their surgery schedules and do the things they needed to do. Now it's sitting here at the end of the fiscal year, 14 or 15 months after the beginning of the fiscal year, and it still hasn't told many hospitals how much money they're getting, and they're almost all running deficits. So they have to temper the services they offer to seniors, who by their age and frailty are above-average users of some of those facilities, necessarily and by intent. We want them to have those services. The government's policies would deny that.

Similarly, in the area of long-term care, this government got into some kind of deal with a lot of private operators to build long-term-care beds. They built building capacity and they changed the rules. Some of the members opposite will have, for example, a celebration of Portugal Day. People with Portuguese backgrounds, people with Polish backgrounds, Ukrainian backgrounds, are finding it harder under this government's policies to get into the facilities that actually cater to their needs. One of the needs of our seniors is to deal with facilities of their language as they get older. But this government had deals and arrangements with private contractors that had beds that were going wanting, so they changed the rules. You couldn't have your choices any more. Seniors have found themselves far flung from their loved ones, far flung from the environments that some of them helped, through their long careers, to build up with their donations so that they and their extended families would have someplace to go. Suddenly, that's denied by the change in policy of this government.

Of course, we know how Seniors' Month began, with the government running afraid of its other policy of increasing fees. They say, suddenly, that we won't see those 15% fee hikes from a government that provides the least amount of funding per senior in long-term care, because almost all are seniors, an average age of 85, coming into our long-term-care facilities. They get the least amount of money per patient anywhere in the country, here in Ernie Eves's—legacy of Mike Harris's—Ontario. That's what happens in terms of seniors and what they can look forward to, yet this government says it's now got extra money to hand out. It can hand out extra money. It can hit seniors with a 15% increase, but today it has extra money to hand out. A \$5-billion hole in its budget, but it has extra money to hand out. How did that happen? How did this government come to believe that seniors were so gullible that they would go for that?

There's one good thing I want to say about the seniors' policies, and that's some of the fraud workshops. We've been holding them in my riding. I would really caution that this particular bill be part of that presentation, that it be explained to seniors how to watch not just for the people who want to repair your roof and the people who want to take you to town for your sewer

backup, but actually for the governments who would put forward this kind of real betrayal of trust for seniors. There may be seniors out there willing to take it at face value, because that's the kind of province they grew up in. They didn't grow up with slick political parties like this, who take their marching orders from people in the backrooms who say, "Here's what you should do: you should throw over any responsible approach to programs, even fiscal responsibility. Get rid of that. Instead, you should take a purely political road here. You need to save your hides, people. That's what you've got to do, and you've got to offer something." That's what we have in front of us: an exposed package that's meant to appeal to people in the crassest way at election time. It's not a thoughtful policy.

Where did this come from in terms of the priorities of this province? How did this come out?

It relates to housing; it relates to education. Let's talk about housing first. Seniors' housing in this province: dead, cold, shut down. There is no more seniors' housing from them, because I guess they think people aren't getting older and won't need those safe and warm accommodations. Indeed, what happened to the people living in the High Park apartments that were bought out by some of the people who benefited from the policies of this government? Minto bought out dozens of apartment buildings. What happened? They used this government's policy of maximum rent and increased rents 35% to 40%. In this House, we asked them, "Fix that loophole. Do something about it." Instead, they stood silently by as senior after senior after senior lost their apartment. Some of them had been there for 15 and 20 and 25 years, and they got shipped out by this government's approach to their housing.

Interjection.

Mr Kennedy: Incredibly, one of the members opposite, I believe one of the York region members for Oak Ridges, talks about what the vacancy rate is. These same apartments that under some kind of balanced referee system cost \$800 or \$900, cost \$1,400 today. There are a couple of them vacant. Seniors couldn't get back in there to get a look at them. They can't get into the buildings. The lovely places they deserve to live, in walking distance from High Park, and you kicked them out of there with your reckless policies. That's what you did.

Interjection.

Mr Kennedy: You're happy to break a few eggs. I guess you are. I guess you must be, because that's exactly what you did.

In my own riding, Loyola Arrupe, seniors' housing that did exist, was being run, and this government, in its rush to download, took one of the better, if not one of the best, places for seniors to live and took away its subsidy. We walked across the aisle and talked to the Minister of Housing at the time, Mr Clement, and said, "Look, this is a mistake. It needs to be fixed." It took weeks and weeks. We had to bring down 60 seniors here, and suddenly Mr Clement changed his mind. It shows the willingness to be

reckless with the well-being of seniors—not to be stewards, not to show trust or respect, not to conserve dignity. That's not what this particular brand of Progressive Conservatives does. "Progressive" I guess doesn't work but "Conservatives" does. That's the record and that's clearly what's happening in front of us.

When it comes to the property taxes, what's happening to the people in my riding because of their fair market value is that their market valuations—what they said they wouldn't do, they've done—have gone up 60% in the last four years. This tax, even if it wasn't such an election bribe, even if it wasn't something that they were probably going to have to take back or cut something else that matters to seniors to make happen, even if that wasn't true, they would still be giving back only a little bit of what they already took away.

Look at the case in Toronto this year. They are dining out on the fact that there's an increase in the value of housing. That has slammed seniors. This tax needs to be curtailed in areas that are subject to up-and-down speculation. Some of the members opposite are affected by that, and I haven't heard a peep from them on why we need to protect our seniors better. What did they put in their bill about property taxes? That the municipality "may" protect seniors. What's offered in Toronto? You can add it on at the end of your days. You can pay that tax and you can pass nothing on to your children. That's the best they could do.

Now they're prepared to go around the wisdom of seniors and say, "We're going to give you this." They understand well what this is about. They understand the trade-off they're being asked to make. This is divisive. If they thought it would get them votes, they would say to 22-year-olds, "You don't pay for hip surgery any more." It's divisive. They underestimate the seniors of this province.

They're concerned with education. They want to see it done well. This government has cut education in Toronto by 25% and the property taxes have gone up incredibly. That's true in a number of the members' ridings. They would say to the seniors of this province, "Take this electoral bribe, take this inducement, take this incentive and don't worry about all those other things that happened to you in terms of chronic care, health care, home care, housing and so on. Don't worry about your future." You're saying the wrong thing to them, because they will worry about the future of people yet to come in this province. That's what seniors in this province care about.

The Deputy Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Kormos: Thank goodness, because after this 10-minute round of comments and questions, I get to speak. I've been looking forward to it all afternoon. I've been sitting here—I'd like to say "patiently," but quite frankly, I've been quite anxious. I've been chomping at the bit, eager to get the floor and talk to folks about matters with respect to this bill and I suppose a few other things that, undoubtedly, I will relate directly to this bill.

I saw an interesting item this morning in the Toronto Sun. It's about when Stockwell Day, an Alliance

Member of Parliament, was with a Liberal MP called Mark Eyking. They were swimming at the beach in Morocco. Eyking, the Liberal MP, was swept away by an undertow. This isn't something that's going to end with a punchline, friends. I'm reading from the Toronto Sun this morning. Day says it was a horrifying experience. He doesn't indicate he made any effort to save Liberal MP Eyking, but says it was a horrible experience.

The question is, what were Stockwell Day, Alliance Member of Parliament, and Liberal Member of Parliament Mark Eyking doing on a beach in Casablanca when they are Canadian Members of Parliament? Well, it was a junket; it was yet another junket. What ticks off seniors where I come from is politicians taking junkets to Casablanca, Morocco. And there's more, which I will be more than pleased to elaborate on in around eight minutes' time when I get the floor.

1730

Hon Tina R. Molinari (Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I am pleased to enter my comments on the debate from the member for Parkdale-High Park. What this bill does, and what needs to be clarified, is that this is helping seniors stay in their homes. These are the homes where they've had their birthdays, their Christmas parties, their holiday parties. What this does is allow them to keep their homes.

This bill, in the full amount, is about a \$450-million benefit throughout the province. That means an average senior across the province, or in my riding of Thornhill, will receive about \$475 per year. To the seniors in Thornhill, this means a lot.

I also need to take this opportunity to comment on some of the comments made by the member for Eglinton-Lawrence, who talked about the hard-working councillor in the city of Vaughan, Mario Racco, who happens to be a Liberal candidate. He was working so hard that in April 1995 the Toronto Star said he didn't even support funding to fight the closure of the Keele Valley landfill site. This is on the Oak Ridges moraine, the one the member for Eglinton-Lawrence purports to support all the time. It's clear that this member is very much inconsistent with their party, the flip-flop they constantly do, and continue to do.

The people of Ontario have to recognize that this party and this government care about the people of Ontario, care about the seniors, and that's why we want to help seniors by giving them back an education tax credit that they pay year after year. This will help every senior in the province. I don't know where the other side of this House is coming from in not supporting this very important legislation.

Mr Joseph Cordiano (York South-Weston): I don't know how many times this government needs to be reminded of that fact that their tax-cutting schemes always favour those at the highest end of the income scale. Why is it so difficult for you to understand that, particularly when it comes to seniors? It is absolutely astounding that this government cannot comprehend that

their tax cuts go to help those people—it's irrefutable. Those are the facts.

I would like to understand why this government time and time again fails to understand why those people at the highest end of the income scale don't need the help they're offering. Many of them have approached us and said, "We don't want this. It's embarrassing that we have to have a tax cut of the kind you're talking about for those people at the highest income levels." They don't need it, they don't even want it, and yet you're shoving it off to them. As I said before, if this were targeted to seniors with fixed income levels—we used to have, if you'll recall, and some of you will not recall, a property tax grant for seniors in the province. It was capped and it was the kind that—

Mr Kormos: In 1992, NDP.

Mr Cordiano: And I think that having it targeted to those seniors who could use it most is—

Hon Mr Klees: Discriminating.

Mr Cordiano: No, it's not discriminating. It is reasoned, it's rational, it's logical, for God's sake. You can't get through to these people, because the ideology gets in the way. It blinds you. It makes you completely unreasoned when it comes to taxes. Those who can most afford it don't need it. Why are you giving it to them? If you targeted those seniors who really need it, imagine what you could do with the \$450 million. That's what we're asking for on this side of the House.

Mr Bisson: The government says they've got to be fair to everybody. That's why they've invented this particular scheme. I guess they've got a funny way of describing what's fair, but let's take a look at what this means.

Poor people like Conrad Black, who's got a couple properties in Canada, a little bit of property probably worth a few million dollars—he doesn't even live in Canada any more. But it's important because we've got to be fair to Conrad Black to make sure that Conrad gets the kind of rebate or, I should say, gets taxes back, a gift, a little bit of corporate welfare going out, so that he can afford to live in England and be part of the polo club, rub shoulders with the royals—very important—the Westons and the Stronachs. It's important for them too because they're hard-working people, like my good friend said. Mr Stronach immigrated to Canada, true; worked hard, true; built an empire, true, and we're very grateful. But do Conrad Black and Mr Stronach need yet another tax break?

I just say that you have a funny way of describing what's fair. I guess it's important. We've got to treat these poor little rich people a little bit fairer. I understand that polo clubs have increased the fees for members. You've got to get the money from somewhere. It would be unfair to ask somebody like Conrad Black to pay his polo club fees out of his chump change, his bank account. We should have the taxpayers of Ontario fund it by way of a tax credit, while seniors living on a modest income somewhere in Ontario get 120 bucks because they're in an apartment and they happen to be on a

pension that pays about \$1,200 or \$1,400 a month. I say that Tories have a funny way of describing "fair."

I'm a New Democrat. I say "fair" is helping the one at the bottom. Help the one who needs the money. They're the people who need help from the government, not people like Frank Stronach.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Parkdale-High Park has two minutes to respond.

Mr Kennedy: I appreciate the comments of all the members. I understand that the member from Thornhill didn't respond that directly to my comments, but I did hear a comment from her across the way that we shouldn't discriminate against Conrad Black. That perfectly encapsulates this bill, that the member for Thornhill would think we can't discriminate against Mr Black. With all respect, Mr Black is a Canadian citizen and he should not be subject to discrimination. But the point here is that seniors in this province suffer discrimination. They suffer discrimination from a lack of ambition on their behalf by this government. It's reflected in health care, in housing and in the security they feel about the places around them.

That's the point. It's not about the money the government pretends to put in their pockets; it's what they would do instead. It's that attitude that I think seniors in this province, with the experience they've had and, frankly, not the stereotypes, but the wisdom that has accumulated—setting those detectors on high is going to be necessary as this government steps through its abuse of this House toward an election campaign.

Again, we've seen the cuts in housing. We've seen what that has meant in terms of the lack of rent control. This money is already missing from the pockets of seniors. We would be in favour of ways to restore security to seniors, but that security is going to come from some of the services they need to have there for them, and most of all from a government that is going to attend to their needs.

We have a growing senior population. We have a need for—not everything. Some in the government would say you can do everything. You can't. There's a \$5-billion hole in the budget. Something would have to give. Someone probably would have to be hurt in order for this to be delivered. We're telling the people of this province, "You can't have everything, but you can have and expect reasonably"—what this government hasn't done—"the important things to be done well." That includes a dignified, respectful place to be a senior in Ontario under new management.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate.

1740

Mr Kormos: Finally I get the floor. Here it is the end of the day on a Thursday, the end of the Legislature's week, for all intents and purposes, because the Legislature doesn't sit on Fridays. I'm headed back down to Niagara tomorrow morning. I'm going to be seeing folks and doing things down in Welland, Thorold, Pelham and south St Catharines, as well as on Saturday, through Sunday, when we're back up here again.

Look, where I come from, and I've told you this before, seniors are deathly concerned about the defunding and ongoing underfunding of health care by this government. Seniors are deathly concerned about the incredible shortage of nursing staff in our hospitals. Seniors who want to try to continue living in their own homes in their senior and retirement years are terrified by the cuts to home care services that they rely on. Seniors are confounded by the new, higher and more frequent user fees they're confronted with on a daily basis. Seniors are appalled by electricity rate increases flowing from this government's privatization and deregulation of Ontario hydroelectricity; it doubled, tripled and quadrupled their hydro rates. Seniors know that even now, with the phony hydro rate cap, they have been paying, as have other taxpayers, over \$1.5 billion to maintain that artificial price of 4.3 for Ernie Eves's privatized and deregulated hydroelectricity. Seniors are concerned about their grandkids. Seniors are concerned about their children who have little ones and can't get them into daycare centres. Seniors know full well about the huge lineups for daycare. They try to help out but, as they get older, it becomes more difficult for them to deal with little toddlers and preschool kids. They know that daycare is good for kids.

You see, where I come from, seniors believe that Ontario Hydro has got to be restored to public ownership in a fully regulated system that provides electricity at cost, just like the New Democrats advocate in their platform.

Where I come from, seniors believe that we as a province have to respond promptly to the Romanow report and restore funding to health care, get nurses back in their jobs and respond to the doctor crisis.

Seniors where I come from know that we have to respond to the Rozanski report and get that \$2 billion back into educational funding.

Seniors where I come from know that tuition fees for their grandkids increasing by over 150%—\$20,000 and \$21,000 a year in tuition alone—are preventing their grandkids from getting the college and university educations that those kids, darn it, are entitled to.

Where I come from, seniors have been beaten up brutally by stock markets manipulated by criminal CEOs, the Enrons and Nortels of North America that have stripped their modest assets bare. Seniors are appalled that John Roth can get a multi-million dollar payout after destroying a company that employed thousands of people—and manipulates stock markets so that people like those seniors, who had modest investments, are left penniless.

Seniors where I come from are concerned about increased property taxes across the board—their own, but their kids' and their grandkids' as well. They've seen those property taxes increase dramatically since 1995, as this government has downloaded more and more on to municipalities.

Seniors where I come from are appalled by a government that goes to a nursing home and tells seniors in that

nursing home that they should get out to work, because this government no longer recognizes, understands, accepts or will tolerate a retirement age of 65.

Seniors where I come from are the kinds of working women and men who have fought during their lifetimes in their workplaces, as trade unionists, non-trade unionists and small business people, to get a younger retirement age so they could retire, without dying within six months, and enjoy their retirement years with some level of decency and dignity. They fought for better pensions. They fought for safer workplaces so they wouldn't be maimed and crippled during their working lives.

Seniors where I come from know that this government has raided the budgets of health care and education to fund the outrageous tax cuts for the richest people in this province. This government's bogus budget alone put an additional \$3.5 million of income tax back into Frank Stronach's pocket—not his corporate income, his personal income. Every penny of that \$3.5 million is coming from health care and education and environmental protection. It's coming from the Ministry of Labour, which means darned near no labour inspectors doing real live on-site labour inspections. It comes from the Ministry of Agriculture, which means we have but a handful of meat inspectors left here in the province of Ontario, notwithstanding the obvious risk of Ontario residents' exposure to mad cow disease, among other things.

Seniors where I come from know that the de-funding of public health—because it was from the de-funding of public health that the money came to subsidize the Frank Stronachs and the Conrad Blacks and the John Roths—oh, and the Isabel Bassetts and the Rosedale and Forest Hill ilk. Seniors where I come from know that it was the gutting of public health care that was the process whereby money was raised to provide tax cuts for the richest people in this province.

Seniors where I come from watched in horror as this government walked into a nursing home to tell old folks to get back to work, knowing full well that already far too many seniors are working. They're working, not because they want the social interaction. Good grief, they can get that down at the seniors' club, the Rose City Seniors' Activity Centre in Welland, the Thorold seniors' centre, the Merriton seniors' centre. They've got all sorts of things they'd like to be doing with their lives. But no, they're out working, and they're out working at K-Mart and McDonald's and other minimum-wage jobs.

Seniors where I come from know that this government has been criminal in its abuse of the lowest-paid workers in this province by freezing minimum wage at \$6.85 for the last eight years—not a penny increase in salaries for the lowest income workers in this province from this government. The NDP increased minimum wages four times in the years 1990 to 1995. This government hasn't increased minimum wage by a penny. Just who are those minimum-wage workers? More often than not, they're women and more often than not, they're single moms working out there, not just at one job, but two and three jobs to raise their kids.

This government's disdain and contempt for those lowest-paid workers has meant that they've suffered a 20% income loss over the course of the last eight years, because that's what inflation has done to their minimum wages of \$6.85 an hour. That's why New Democrats believe that we need an immediate increase of the minimum wage to \$8 an hour with an annual review so that never again do the lowest-paid workers in this province fall behind.

Minimum-wage workers are not the only concern of seniors. Persons with disabilities, persons whose disability benefits haven't seen a penny increase in eight years and who have suffered the same 20% erosion in their benefits—a benefit that was unliveable in the first instance, but has forced those people into the most horrible states of poverty as a result of the passage of those eight years. Seniors where I come from know that disability benefits have to be increased promptly, first to reflect the 20% erosion in their incomes by virtue of inflation and, second, to respond to the realities of rental rates that have skyrocketed in this province because this government has abandoned rent control and fairness for tenants. Let me tell you, a whole lot of those tenants are seniors too, and they've been hit and hit and hit again by rental rates that have gone through the roof.

Seniors are outraged when they witness politicians here at Queen's Park, Conservatives and Liberals, collaborating to pass legislation that would give themselves a 28% salary increase, and not a penny for the lowest-income workers, not a penny for persons with disabilities, not a penny for persons on social assistance. Yet Conservatives and Liberals can try to sneak through in the dark of the night, greased up like a carnival pig, legislation that gives MPPs here, Liberals and Tories, a 28% salary increase, already among the top 3% and 4% of income earners in this province. That's obscene and that's criminal.

1750

Seniors in this province are appalled at the junkets politicians reward themselves with. I mentioned earlier a Toronto Star article this morning. One Stockwell Day, a federal member of Parliament—I think he's from somewhere out west; I've heard his name before—along with a Liberal MP called Mark Eyking, whose name I've never heard before—well, have you ever heard of him, Mr Arnott, Liberal MP Mark Eyking?

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): No, but I bet he's never heard of me.

Mr Kormos: Has anybody here heard of Liberal MP Mark Eyking? He's got to be as backbench as you can get. The Liberal MP Mark Eyking is on a junket—this sounds like a joke, but it isn't. It sounds like a set-up by a stand-up comic for a punchline, but it isn't.

Liberal Mark Eyking, whom I've never heard of—I don't know whether these folks have heard of him and nobody across the way has ever heard of him. Here's Liberal Mark Eyking, obviously from somewhere in Canada, and Stockwell Day, whom I have heard of—I can't quite recall in what context—off on a junket to Casablanca, Morocco, and I'm going, "This is remarkable."

It was only because they found themselves in some undertow as they were swimming in the ocean—I mean here we are—this is not a Humphrey Bogart movie; this is real life. Day in the Speedo, Eyking—well, I presume. I've never been to Casablanca, but here are these two clowns in their Speedos on the beach in Casablanca, Morocco, on the taxpayers' tab. No, they're not meeting high-level officials. They're swimming off this white sandy beach with the little straw-roofed kiosks, with the drinks with the cherries and the little umbrellas in them.

So here we are, a Liberal MP and an Alliance MP on the taxpayers' tab in Morocco. Get this. You've got to understand—maybe you don't have to, but both MPs were on a trip to Morocco and several other countries to gain a better understanding of the post-September 11 Muslim world.

Mr Arnott's laughing. Mr Arnott cannot contain himself. Mr Arnott is holding his sides. Mr Arnott has tears trickling down his face. He finds the humour in this as readily as I do. Taxpayers, including seniors—on a junket to Morocco among a total of 11. Now catch this. They didn't identify the countries, but I bet you they were all in warm climes. I bet you Morocco wasn't the only one—

Mr Arnott: Let me see that clipping.

Mr Kormos: Come on over here, one of the pages. I bet you Morocco wasn't the only one with a white sandy beach. That's shocking stuff. That's what drives seniors—take that over to Arnott, but bring it back to me because I may have to refer to it again—just wild.

What did we discover today? This isn't restricted to federal MPs. What we find out today in the Globe and Mail—and this isn't even a multi-party junket or a group; this is a solo performance—is that the Minister of Energy, who's within weeks, possibly days, of no longer being the Minister of Energy is ringing up 27Gs, 27 grand, 27,000 bucks in airfares to visit Rome, Paris, London and, oh, so beautiful—and it is beautiful—Glasgow. The Minister of Energy, confesses that the workload was so low—there were only 12 meetings in total arranged for a 14-day tour through Europe, and all of them were before 12 noon. Had it been the Premier going, none of them would have been until after 12 noon, because we know the Premier doesn't like the early morning stuff.

We've got the feds sending MPs on a junket. Do seniors find this outrageous? You bet your boots they do. And seniors find it outrageous that this government sends one of its ministers, who is about to be deposed—

The Deputy Speaker: I'm sure the member for Niagara Centre is going to get back to Bill 43. I'd like him to get on with that part of the debate, please.

Mr Kormos: Mr Speaker, I want to thank you for your direction and guidance. I want to tell you that I respect your position and appreciate, as I always have, your efforts today to get me back on track.

What I want to say to you when we're talking about Bill 43 is, let's understand where our tax dollars are being spent. Bill 43 invests tax dollars in Conrad Black

and his property taxes; it invests tax dollars in Galen and Hilary Weston and their property taxes; it invests tax dollars in John Roth, the Nortel honcho who ripped off thousands and walked away with millions.

Let me put it to you this way. Back in the old days, I was a criminal lawyer and I used to act for a lot of bad people; I really did. I was a criminal defence lawyer. I acted for bikers—the whole nine yards. I've never met a biker who's stolen as much money from more people as John Roth did during the course of his manipulation of Nortel. If anybody deserves to go to jail, it's guys like Roth, who have ripped off seniors and a whole lot of other people who worked hard to save their money. I just hope there is a cell left in our overcrowded jails for the corporate criminals who have ripped off so many.

Where do our tax dollars go? Our tax dollars go to subsidize the property taxes of Conrad Black, Galen and Hilary Weston, and Isabel Bassett herself—it may not be this year, because she may not be 65 yet, but I'm sure she's close. Where do our tax dollars go? Our tax dollars go to send the Minister of Energy on \$27,000 air-flight-alone junkets to tour Rome, Paris, London and Glasgow, to sleep and stay in the finest hotels, to drink and eat at the most expensive restaurants and then to hide and conceal the costs from the taxpayer by running them in no small part, to the tune of at least five grand and maybe as much as 10 grand, through OPG. That's what ticks seniors off where I come from.

They're hard pressed to listen to this government, its cabinet ministers or its backbenchers talk about what this government is doing for seniors, when what should be of real concern to seniors where I come from is what this government is doing to seniors. This government is making our folks and our grandfolks, who have worked hard all their lives, subsidize its rich corporate bosses, subsidize the profitable and wealthy corporations. This government is the one telling retirees to get up off their butts and get out there to work, instead of telling those retirees, like New Democrats are committed to doing, that they have pension plans that are secure, that are adequate and that will allow them to live out their senior years in decency and dignity. This government isn't about what it has done for seniors; it's about what it has done to seniors.

The Deputy Speaker: I now deem that a motion to adjourn has been made.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

ONTARIO NORTHLAND RAILWAY

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): The member for Timmins-James Bay has indicated dissatisfaction with an answer to a question he asked of the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. The member for Timmins-James Bay now has five minutes to explain.

1800

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): Just to recap the question last Tuesday: we know that the Ontario government was planning and working toward the privatization of the Ontario Northland Railway commission, and people of northern Ontario, by and large, are opposed to that sale and want to keep Ontario Northland within public control. What happened was that Canadian National Railway had been working with the provincial government toward the purchase of the said railway.

As New Democrats, we have been saying that there's no way CN was ever going to buy the ONR and guarantee the jobs that are in North Bay now and guarantee the employment levels that are there now and, in fact, even services at the current levels, which quite frankly need to be increased. To the government's credit, what happened was that CN was not able to give the kind of assurances that the northerners wanted when it came to employment and service levels, and when the government became convinced that in fact CN would not at least comply with those requests, CN basically backed away from the table.

My question to the minister was very simple: is the government at this point going to back away from the privatization agenda of the Ontario Northland commission? That was a simple question. The minister this week unfortunately did not answer the question, so I put the question again to him today. First question: will the government now categorically say, "We are not going to privatize Ontario Northland," yes or no? The second part of the question is, if the answer is no, that you're not going to—which I hope it is—what plans do you have to deal with some of the issues that have to be dealt with at the ONR?

We agree with the government, as do northerners, that there needs to be a type of restructuring at Ontario Northland in order to provide the kind of service that northerners need. The current schedule that services passenger rail service along the corridor of Highway 11 is not adequate. People don't take the train in big numbers. Why? Nobody wants to get off the train at 3 o'clock in the morning in Kirkland Lake in the middle of winter when they're trying to get in from Toronto. So clearly we have some scheduling issues that we need to deal with.

Are we going to be investing the kind of money that we need in order to build up the infrastructure of not only rail passenger service, but also of freight services, so that we're able to do a better job servicing not only passengers, but the rail customers like Falconbridge and Tembec and others that utilize the railway? I guess the third part of investment is the true direction that Ontario Northland has to take, in my view, which is their role in economic development. Is the government going to work with us in northern communities to ensure that Ontario Northland gets into the business of economic development in northeastern Ontario by providing some of the necessary infrastructure to make it happen?

For example, tourism could be a large business in northeastern Ontario for all of the communities along the

Highway 11 corridor, and especially for the James Bay coast. If the government's not going to privatize, will they work with us and provide the capital needed and the ongoing support in order to do those things that are important to northeastern Ontario?

The Deputy Speaker: The Minister of Northern Development and Mines has five minutes to reply.

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): I want to thank my colleague across the floor from Timmins-James Bay for giving me the opportunity to speak once again on behalf of people in northeastern Ontario and on behalf of our employees at ON Rail and ONTC. I just want to begin by saying that, in your comments of the last four minutes, I don't disagree with a lot of what you've said. I think you did a pretty good summary, actually, of where the government has been on this issue.

Back in April of last year, I think Premier Eves made very clear the commitment of the government, as we worked toward improving service to our customers, making sure that tourism would be enhanced, that economic development would be enhanced. The track record of other railways in this country, and certainly in Ontario, is that they're not providing passenger service. We do that through ON Rail and we do that particularly up to Moosonee and with the Little Bear and the Polar Bear. All of that—protecting jobs, maintaining service, enhancing service, improving economic development opportunities—has always been part of the plan.

In April 2002, as we were looking to others to partner with us or perhaps at a sale of ON Rail, the Premier made it clear that the government's commitment during all of these discussions would be that, "If one of those proposals does not provide improved service to the people of northern Ontario and does not guarantee the jobs that are already there—if those basic criteria are not met—then we won't be accepting any of the proposals, if I have anything to say about it."

We went through a period, beginning particularly in October of last year, of exclusive negotiations with what the ONTC, the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission, board recommended to the government was the best proposal at that time among four or five proposals to meet the government's objectives of preserving jobs, of maintaining and enhancing economic and job opportunities in the north and along the northeastern Ontario corridor where this railway line runs.

At the end of the day, as the honourable members pointed out, after having talks with CN for quite a long period of time, they weren't able to meet our number one criterion set forth by the Premier, and that was protection of the jobs, protection of our employees.

Ontario taxpayers are providing \$19.7 million this year in subsidy to the ONTC, particularly the rail

division. I think northern and northeastern Ontario taxpayers, people who live, work and raise their families there, think it's worth every penny. I can't think of a rail line in North America that a government doesn't subsidize to some degree or another. In this particular case, we're subsidizing the non-commercial aspect, which is really the passenger aspect of the railway itself.

The future? The honourable member raises a good question, and that was his original question. If by some miracle someone came along with the gobs of money this valuable piece of real estate is worth, with the job protection guarantees and our economic development enhancement criteria and all the other things we have put forward as absolute bottom lines in any talks, then yes, we would look at it. But I think realistically the government is going to keep this railway. I don't see anyone else on the horizon.

We're going to work with the people and the unions that were represented in their proposal by the internal solutions group. We're going to work with the municipalities along the line, with everybody that has good, positive ideas about moving forward, improving service and opportunities for the people of northeastern Ontario, preserving those jobs until those people would naturally retire. We don't want to lay people off.

Again the subsidy itself is quite small in the overall scheme of things. When you think about it, it's just a few minutes of health care. When you've got a \$28-billion health care budget, just over \$19 million in rail subsidy is a pretty small price to pay for maintaining and enhancing economic prosperity in that part of the province.

So the immediate future, the foreseeable future is that the government will keep the rail line. It will continue to be owned by the province of Ontario. I look forward to working with the board, the municipalities and my colleague AL McDonald, who was absolutely crucial and instrumental in reaching the right decision with respect to our talks with CN. Rick Brassard, one of our candidates along the line, was also very helpful.

I want to thank, in the few seconds I have left, all the employees who waited so patiently during this process. At the end of the day, if I read the media, if I read the comments from our employees and municipal leaders in the northeast, the government made the right decision. We lived up to our promise. We're going to continue to support our workers at ON Rail, at ONTC and the people of northeastern Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker: I deem the motion to adjourn has now been carried. Therefore, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 Monday afternoon, June 9, in the year of our Lord 2003.

The House adjourned at 1808.

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Fourth Session, 37th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Quatrième session, 37^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Monday 9 June 2003

Lundi 9 juin 2003

Speaker
Honourable Gary CarrPrésident
L'honorable Gary CarrClerk
Claude L. DesRosiersGreffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 9 June 2003

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 9 juin 2003

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

RELAY FOR LIFE

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): On Friday, June 6, I was fortunate and honoured to participate in a wonderful and touching event in my riding of Brant that brought over 100 volunteers, 500 participants and corporate and community leaders together to help fight cancer. Relay for Life is an annual event organized by the Cancer Society that raises funds for cancer research and support services for people living with cancer, including their families. Over \$100,000 was raised by 51 teams walking, skipping, running, and in my case crawling around Lions Park track in Brantford for 12 hours, from Friday at 7 pm to 7 am Saturday morning.

There was an opening ceremony called the survivors' lap. Here, 94 cancer survivors did a victory lap to inspire all of us and to show us that cancer can be beaten. To them and their families we say thank you for your courage and determination.

At 10 pm, a very moving and beautiful moment called the "luminaries" took place. Here, candles were lit that circled the track in memory of individuals who have succumbed to cancer. These luminaries kept the darkness away for the rest of the evening. To these individuals and their families, our prayers are with you.

This event was held in ridings across the province. To all organizers, sponsors, participants, volunteers, entertainers, donors, and especially survivors and luminaries' families, we say thank you for a job well done. We know cancer can be beaten.

FEDERAL FIREARMS LEGISLATION

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): I rise in the House today to applaud the stand taken by the Attorney General to not enforce the ill-fated federal firearms legislation. This is a victory for all Ontarians, and particularly the more than 3,000 law-abiding gun owners in my riding of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex who have written me and made it very clear they oppose this useless waste of more than two billion of their hard-earned tax dollars to implement and enforce an out-of-control program.

It is worth noting that \$2 billion would pay the cost of more than 20,000 front-line police officers who would truly make our streets, our homes and our families safer; \$2 billion would also go a long way to re-establishing Ottawa's fair share of health care funding, assisting Toronto and Ontario in their fight against SARS and funding the 16 SuperBuild infrastructure projects, funded by our government but left stranded by Ottawa, not to mention providing our beleaguered farmers with their fair share of desperately needed safety net programs.

Given that there are now four provinces that have publicly stated they will not enforce this legislation, I am left wondering what it will take for the federal Liberal Party to see the error of their ways. At the very least, I would hope the members opposite would endorse and support the commitment made by this side of the House to oppose this boondoggle which was foolishly and unnecessarily enacted by their federal cousins. Until they do so, I will look forward to hearing the members opposite defend their support of the firearms legislation on the campaign trail.

CONSERVATIVE PLATFORM

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): I always find it interesting to hear what respected Conservatives are saying about the Harris-Eves Tories. Take David Crombie, for instance. Crombie is a Tory's Tory. He was mayor of Toronto, he ran for the federal PC leadership and he was a senior cabinet minister under Clark and Mulroney. Here's what David Crombie had to say about Ernie Eves's platform: "This government is more interested in delivering gimmicks than in delivering public policy."

That's what David Crombie said. He was then asked, would he vote for gimmicks in the upcoming provincial election? "No," Crombie said. "Gimmicks are not what we need."

Truer words have rarely been spoken before. Mr Crombie was understandably upset at the Harris-Eves Tories' bullying and betrayal of municipalities. Crombie told it like it is, saying, "In the last five or six years, the provincial government has basically humbled and hobbled municipalities."

Dalton McGuinty will work with municipalities to bring about a real change to improve the lives of people in Ontario. Dalton McGuinty will give two cents per litre of the existing gas tax to municipalities for public transit. Dalton McGuinty will help municipalities put more than 1,000 more police officers on the street. Most import-

antly, Dalton McGuinty's platform is a costed, responsible, realistic plan for change that will improve the lives of Ontarians.

Let Ernie Eves try to sell his gimmicks. Voters can choose real change by choosing Dalton McGuinty.

Now, if I had more time, and I regret I don't, I would like to run through what Bill Davis has had to say about the Harris-Eves platform on education. You can read that yourselves. We'll get a little more time, perhaps, and we can bring you what another Tory says about your government.

MÉLANIE GUILLEMETTE

Mr AL McDonald (Nipissing): I would like to speak today about a young woman in my riding who evokes the true meaning of community spirit. Mélanie Guillemette, who attends Algonquin in North Bay, will be traveling to the Caribbean islands of Trinidad and Tobago this coming June 19 as part of a group from across this province who will be distributing wheelchairs to people in need on the islands.

Mélanie's journey began four years ago when she and her youth group called Jeunesse-Interact decided to volunteer their free time to do some meaningful community services for those in need. After their teacher and mentor retired, and with no one ready to continue to guide them, these young adults rallied on as a group with their own determination, inspiration and will for helping others within the community.

One of their ongoing missions was to collect enough bottle tabs so they could purchase a wheelchair for someone in need within the community. Eventually, the North Bay Rotary Club took these young adults under their wing and has been kindly guiding and promoting them through the Rotary Club.

Mélanie heard about a World Community Service project that would involve delivering 280 wheelchairs to needy people in and around Trinidad and Tobago. She became very interested and enthusiastic about becoming a participant in this project, so much so that her mother, Joanne, became just as excited and will be joining Mélanie and others from around Ontario in order to personally distribute these much-needed wheelchairs. I would like to salute Mélanie's efforts and determination and wish her continued success in all her endeavours.

VISITORS

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): I'd like all members to welcome the family of a great legislative page, the first page from St Clare Catholic school in the great riding of St Paul's, Kristian Mandarano. His family is here: Anthony, Teresa, Vince and Dominic Mandarano. We all welcome you.

BEST START PLAN FOR CHILDREN

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): Today, I had the opportunity

to present the Liberal Best Start plan for children to the social services committee of the city of Toronto.

At this meeting I was appalled to learn that the city of Toronto's crisis with child care is getting worse. The city lost over 1,600 subsidized child care spaces in 2002, in spite of the fact that there are over 15,000 children waiting for a space. This year, provincial funding shortfalls will require Toronto to cut a further 500 spaces, a decision the city wants desperately to avoid.

The Ontario Liberal Party believes that access to quality child care is an important investment for our communities. Dalton McGuinty's Best Start plan for children is a \$300-million plan to expand child care subsidies in Ontario. Under a Liberal government, fully 75% of Ontario families would qualify for assistance with their child care costs.

In addition to our commitment, we will spend every federal dollar from the national child care agenda on regulated child care. Also, we will work co-operatively with our municipal partners to develop a quality child care system and ensure that municipalities like Toronto will no longer have to make the untenable choices brought on by the Ernie Eves government.

1340

CONSTITUENCY STAFF

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): As members will know, I will not be returning to this place after the next election; I'm not standing. I want to take this opportunity to thank the staff I have been blessed to have over the years. I want to say very directly to every member who is here for their second term or more that I think they will agree they got re-elected in large part because of the dedication of their staff and the fact that their staff care about their constituents just as much as they do.

I can't name all the staff that I've been fortunate enough to work with, having been a cabinet minister, parliamentary assistant and House leader, but I can mention the staff who are with me now; many of them have been there for almost the entire 13 years.

I would ask this House to join with me in recognizing their contribution and their efforts to my constituents in Hamilton West and formerly in Hamilton Centre. They are: Connie MacKay, Maria Massi, Linda Mitchell and Frances Lima. I want to thank them on behalf of my constituents.

These are the kinds of people who make calls at night when they have their own family responsibilities. They're the ones who go the extra mile so that when you're out on the hustings, people say, "I'm going to vote for you, because I called your office and I got the response I needed."

In large part, while we're here they are the face of the MPP; they are the MPP. I have been blessed with phenomenal support of staff, and I thank you for everything you have done that's allowed me to be here.

MUSIC AND FILM IN MOTION

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): Life can often be difficult for young artists with dreams for the future. This is especially true in northern Ontario, by nature of its being a smaller market in comparison to the big cities of the south and the United States. However, these artists are persistent. Today it is my pleasure to bring to the attention of this House a great organization in northern Ontario that is helping these people reach their dreams.

Music and Film in Motion is a non-profit organization. Its mandate is to promote and develop the north's music and film industries. This year, with the leadership and vision of executive director Dennis Landry, Music and Film in Motion has begun the Northern Ontario Music and Film Awards. These awards will be centred around an awards ceremony in Sudbury, to be held on September 15. The awards will help to give the local industry the publicity and growth that it needs. Anyone who was born in or now lives in northern Ontario is eligible for the honours.

This organization and its ceremony will help focus attention on the excellent talent that our artists have in the north and in all of Ontario. Money and exposure are often barriers to an artist's success. Thanks to Dennis Landry and his co-workers, that barrier is starting to be eliminated. I hope that you all join me in recognizing their hard work and leadership.

EDUCATION TAX CREDIT

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): Last week, something extraordinary happened. Bill Davis finally spoke out, and he certainly wasn't bland. Here is what former Premier Davis told the Toronto City Summit Alliance: "I take exception to those who would view public education being, shall we say, fragmented by vouchers or charter schools."

It's clear that Bill Davis, Tory Premier for 14 years, does not like your voucher for private schools. Bill Davis, the man Ernie Eves first ran under, said they fragment public education. Bill Davis, education minister for nine years, made his choice and it's for public education. Here is a man the people of Ontario should be proud of.

The Harris-Eves Tories broke their word and funded private schools. The Harris-Eves Tories took \$500 million out of public schools and put it into private schools. Ernie Eves called the private school tax credit ludicrous, but he flip-flopped and today he supports it.

The differences between Bill Davis and Ernie Eves couldn't be more obvious. Bill Davis has always been totally in support of public education. Ernie Eves is taking \$500 million out of public schools to fund private schools.

Bill Davis stood up to his party and said what he believed. Ernie Eves knuckled under to the most extreme elements of his party and flip-flopped on everything from private schools to jailing the homeless.

Bill Davis commands the respect of Ontario. Ernie Eves—well, let's just say he probably wishes Bill Davis had been just a little bit more bland last week.

CARPENTER HOSPICE IN BURLINGTON

Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington): The Carpenter Hospice in Burlington is Ontario's newest residential hospice. It was built entirely through the generous contributions of our community. Since opening in August 2002, more than 75 families have been supported by volunteers and staff at the hospice.

There are nine residential hospices in Ontario that have evolved with different and varied funding allocations from the provincial government. The Carpenter Hospice receives a modest envelope of nursing and home care funding through Halton CCAC, while its remaining resources are raised through private donations and fund-raising efforts. The Victorian Order of Nurses, through a managed contract with the Halton CCAC, provides limited nursing and home care services, with additional care provided by hospice staff.

On April 14, 2003, I wrote to Health Minister Tony Clement asking for a regulatory change to allow hospice programs to receive direct funding under this long-term-care envelope. The results would be less red tape and more dollars driven to front-line services.

Under the proposal, accountability would still rest with the CCAC and they could continue to set the rate of pay based on salary ranges that they approve locally. The main difference is that the staff would be hired directly by the local hospice, and this would create consistency, stability and reliability for patient-family contact and service delivery.

This model would be very well received by the seven hospices that do not receive direct funding. This change would speak to our government's priority of providing well-managed and enhanced health care services closer to home.

REPORT, INTEGRITY COMMISSIONER

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I beg to inform the House that today I have laid upon the table the report of the Integrity Commissioner concerning his review of expense claims under the Cabinet Ministers' and Opposition Leaders' Expenses Review and Accountability Act, 2002, for the period January 1, 2003, to March 31, 2003.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

CALEDON TEEN RANCH ACT, 2003

Mr Arnott moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr24, An Act respecting the Caledon Teen Ranch.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Pursuant to standing order 84, this bill stands referred to the standing committee on regulations and private bills.

JUNKET REGISTRY ACT, 2003
LOI SUR LE REGISTRE
CONCERNANT LES VOYAGES
AUX FRAIS DE LA PRINCESSE, 2003

Mr Kormos moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 88, An Act to amend the Cabinet Ministers' and Opposition Leaders' Expenses Review and Accountability Act, 2002, with respect to keeping a registry of travel expense claims / Projet de loi 88, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2003 concernant l'examen des dépenses et l'obligation de rendre compte des ministres et des chefs d'un parti de l'opposition, relativement à l'établissement d'un registre sur les demandes de remboursement pour des frais de déplacement.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): The short title of this act is the Junket Registry Act. It amends the existing legislation to provide that the Integrity Commissioner shall maintain a register of documents regarding expenses and itineraries incurred in the course of out-of-province travel by all members of the Legislative Assembly. The contents of the registry would be published on the Internet. This is part of the junk-the-junkets program. It will expose junkets, junketeers and those who would travel throughout North America and abroad on summer flings, among others, at taxpayers' expense.

1350

CORONERS AMENDMENT ACT, 2003
LOI DE 2003
MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES CORONERS

Mr Hoy moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 89, An Act to amend the Coroners Act to require that more inquests be held and that jury recommendations be acted on / Projet de loi 89, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les coroners afin d'exiger qu'un plus grand nombre d'enquêtes soient tenues et que les recommandations du jury soient appliquées.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): This bill amends the Coroners Act so that all deaths on highways, in schools, universities, colleges or hospitals are reported to the coroner. The coroner shall investigate all such deaths and the coroner is obliged to hold an inquest into a death unless he or she is satisfied that the death was due to natural causes and was not preventable.

The chief coroner is required to forward jury recommendations to the person or entity to which they are

directed. If the recommendations are directed to a public sector entity, the entity shall implement them if the recommendations deal with matters of public safety. If the public sector entity fails to implement the recommendations, it shall report on the reasons for the failure to the chief coroner within one year after the recommendations are made.

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC ACT AMENDMENT
ACT (SCHOOL BUSES), 2003

LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT LE CODE
DE LA ROUTE (AUTOBUS SCOLAIRES)

Mr Parsons moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 90, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to require that school buses be equipped with flashing orange caution lights / Projet de loi 90, Loi modifiant le Code de la route pour exiger que les autobus scolaires soient équipés de feux d'avertissement orange clignotants.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): This bill amends the Highway Traffic Act to require that school buses be equipped with flashing orange caution lights that warn drivers when the bus is preparing to stop. This requirement applies to new school buses that are put on the road for the first time on or after the day the bill receives royal assent.

VISITORS

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to welcome grades 6, 7 and 8 French immersion students from D'Arcy McGee and their teachers Ms Galecka, Mr Ferrari and Mrs Rashotte. Welcome to Queen's Park.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is there unanimous consent? I'm afraid I heard a no.

Other motions? Back to the government House leader.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I'll say it slower.

Mr Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? Agreed? Agreed.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 96(g), notice for ballot item 13 be waived. That would be Mr Bradley's bill.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

JUNO BEACH CENTRE

Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): It's my pleasure today to speak to a matter that is close to my heart and the hearts of many Ontarians—and Canadians, for that matter.

We all know of the courage and bravery of Canadian veterans of the Second World War, and we all understand that their contributions to peace, freedom and democracy must always be remembered. The government of Ontario is committed to ensuring that future generations know of the valour shown by our veterans, hear of their stories, and understand the great debt that our society owes to them. I am honoured to have participated in the opening last Friday of the new Juno Beach Centre in Normandy, the very place where Canadian soldiers landed on D-Day, 59 years ago.

On September 10, 1939, Canadians went to war to preserve the freedoms that we all hold dear. By the time the Second World War had ended, more than 45,000 Canadians would sacrifice their lives for our freedom and another 55,000 would be wounded defending it. In the long, hard struggle to defend the ideals of the free world, the tide began to turn one fateful and famous day: D-Day, June 6, 1944. As the Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces, General Eisenhower, told the Allied soldiers, "The eyes of the world are upon you. The hope and progress of liberty-loving people everywhere marches with you. I have full confidence in your courage, devotion to duty and skill in battle. We will accept nothing less than full victory."

Before dawn that morning, over 100 ships of the Royal Canadian Navy manned by 10,000 Canadian sailors steamed toward that very coast. Overhead, streams of Canadian bombers dropped thousands of tons of explosives on enemy defences. Canadian fighter pilots battled the enemy in the overcast skies. Then, at just past 8 am, over 21,000 Canadian soldiers stormed the beach that had been code-named Juno. Ahead of them lay kilometres of enemy machine-gun emplacements, concrete forts and barbed wire.

That day 340 Canadians gave their lives. Another 574 were wounded and 47 were taken prisoner. But by the end of the day, the Canadians had pushed through enemy lines, advancing farther than either the British or the American forces. They fought on, despite heavy enemy fire, destruction all around them, the death of their friends and allies, and often in spite of their own wounds.

That courage is something that few, if any, of us can begin to fathom. The soldiers, sailors and airmen who fought on D-Day didn't set out to be heroes. They were simply ordinary young men from all over Canada, many of them from the province of Ontario. By the end of the day, however, they had become heroes, immortalized in the eyes of Canadians and the entire free world. If Vimy Ridge was where Canada was baptized as a nation, surely Juno Beach marked our passage into adulthood. It was a day when we stood shoulder to shoulder with Britain and the United States as one of the world's pre-eminent powers of peace, justice and freedom.

For almost 60 years we have benefited from the peace and freedom that these soldiers earned with their sweat, bought with their blood, and many paid for with their lives.

Last week I was pleased to announce that in addition to supporting the Juno Beach Centre, the government is also creating a veterans' memorial on the grounds of the Legislature.

1400

We must always remember these courageous young soldiers. We must remember their spirit of camaraderie, their heroism, the lives and the families they left behind to serve freedom. We must pass these stories on to the generations that follow. We must ensure that our children and grandchildren know that democracy, freedom and justice are not just ideals to live by, but principles to fight for. We must teach them that not only do we owe our veterans our thanks, but we owe it to them to respect those principles in our daily lives. We must remember each and every day that our many decades of freedom and peace have come at a huge cost in human life and suffering.

There can be no doubt that time has taken its toll. The young men and women who went off to war are fewer and fewer each year. On behalf of the province of Ontario, I want to thank these veterans. Thank you for having the courage to make a difference, to pass the torch, to defend our freedoms and to preserve our peace. These veterans are true heroes in every sense of the word. I salute them; the people of Ontario salute them; Canadians and free people everywhere salute them.

Ontario is honoured to participate in the Juno Beach Centre. It is a fitting tribute and a permanent reminder that good triumphs over evil, justice prevails over tyranny and God almighty watches over the spirit of human decency everywhere. A Canadian, Padre Hickey, witness to the battle at Juno Beach, said, "The wheat field that once bent like any other wheat field back home, now is torn with shell holes, and everywhere you could see the pale, upturned faces of the dead. We dug narrow graves and lowered them to rest. I blessed the group of graves and said the burial prayers. I often thought that somewhere a mother, a father, a wife, a sister or brother still hoped and prayed."

In closing, let us never forget the ultimate price paid for our freedoms and beliefs that, unfortunately, we sometimes take for granted. Let us thank each and every

one of our veterans for helping to light the flame of the human spirit in each and every one of us so that future generations may live with dignity in freedom and in peace.

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): I want to begin by thanking the Premier for his statement. I appreciate the opportunity to respond today on behalf of our caucus.

Every day, we Canadians do something simple but yet profound: we choose. We choose what we'll wear, where we'll go and how we'll get there. We choose our friends, our place of work and our place of worship, if we do in fact choose to worship at all. We choose what we'll say, whether that be about the weather, the news or those who govern us. And from time to time we choose those governments through free elections. We are free to choose because of the choice made by young men and women some 60 years ago. They could have chosen to ignore the travesty and atrocities occurring an ocean away. Instead, they crossed that ocean, landing eventually on a beach in Normandy. They chose to confront and ultimately defeat those who sought to impose dictatorship where there had been democracy, fear where there had been hope and coercion, even death, where there had been choice. By so doing, these young Canadian soldiers traversed another ocean, one that separates good and evil.

Twenty-one thousand Canadians fought their way ashore at Normandy, and with each courageous step they secured the freedom to choose that we enjoy today.

On behalf of our caucus, I want to express my thanks to those Canadians—those with us and those who have passed on—and their families. I thank them also on behalf of my children and all of our children, who have known nothing but the freedom to choose because of the choice these soldiers made some 60 years ago.

I want to commend, on behalf of our caucus and our party, everyone, including the government, associated with the opening of the Juno Beach Centre commemorating Canada's role in the D-Day landings.

I am proud to be leader of my party, but perhaps my most important job was one I held when I was just a young man myself. Between high school and university, I took some time to work as an orderly in the veterans' hospital in Ottawa. I provided basic hands-on care to war veterans. I bathed them and shaved them and combed their hair and brushed their teeth. I turned them from side to side. I learned how to treat bedsores. I sat at their bedside and often listened to their stories. I can tell you they showed the same courage in the twilight of their years as they had shown at dawn in Normandy decades earlier, the same kind of courage the Premier himself referred to, that few of us can even begin to fathom in today's world.

Let us honour that courage with ceremony and memorials, with brick and mortar. But let us honour it as well in another way, with each choice we make as individuals, as Ontarians and as Canadians. Let us choose wisely and bravely as well. Let's choose to never take for granted the freedom to choose and those who fought for it and

died for it on our behalf and on our children's behalf. Let us choose to never forget those brave young Canadians.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I am pleased to be able to take part in this act of remembrance today for a number of reasons. The Premier and the leader of the Liberal Party have referred to the number of Canadians who took part in D-Day: the airmen who flew above the beaches; the sailors who took many soldiers to the Normandy beaches; even the 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion, which, although it hasn't received the publicity of some other airborne operations, certainly was very distinguished on that day; and then all of those Canadian soldiers who landed on the beaches—the Regina Rifles, the Royal Winnipeg Rifles, the Queen's Own Rifles, the North Shore Regiment, the Fort Garry Horse, the 1st Hussars.

The first time I visited Normandy, I was a 20-year-old university student. I must confess, I knew some of the history of the Second World War, but not a lot. What struck me at that time was that there were museums along Normandy. Yes, there were remembrances to British soldiers, to American soldiers, but there were really only a couple of plaques which acknowledged that so many Canadians had been part of that memorable day and so many Canadians had given their lives. So I think what happened just a few short days ago, the opening of the Juno Beach memorial, is long, long overdue, is something that every one of us should feel some sense of pride in and some sense of, finally, their recognition.

1410

I also want to say something personal. When you're a young boy growing up, you probably don't spend a lot of time thinking about these things. When I was just a student in high school, oftentimes hockey practice would be late in the evening, and I can't say how many times a fellow called Joe McKelvie, who used to work late in the evening at the paper mill—he was always getting called in because he was a machinist, and whenever something went down he had to fix it—used to give me a ride home. I'd be hitchhiking home from hockey practice at 9 o'clock at night and he'd pick me up.

I learned later on in life that Joe McKelvie was one of the people who had gone ashore with the Queen's Own Rifles that day. He was somebody I always saw at Remembrance Day ceremonies, always very proud, always dressed in his uniform—very proud of what he had accomplished and what other people had accomplished.

I wonder what someone like Joe McKelvie would feel today if he knew this was finally happening. Regrettably he is one of those who has passed away—he passed away last summer—but he knew this memorial was being built, and he used to tell everyone how proud he was of it.

I hope the families of those people who gave so much—the children, the grandchildren—will feel equally proud. I hope all citizens of Ontario and all Canadians will recognize what an incredible act this is and how important it is.

Whenever I think about these issues, I'm always drawn to a book that Desmond Morton and Jack

Granatstein wrote. It's called *A Nation Forged in Fire: Canadians and the Second World War*. There's a quotation in it that I think summarizes better than anything I have ever read the nature of the people who were there. They quote a member of the Belgian Resistance named Gerard Adriaenssens, who every November 1 takes part in a remembrance ceremony for Canadian soldiers. He was just a boy at the time, but this is what he remembers. Some Canadian soldiers spent the night in their barn, and he said:

"They were not Rambo soldiers, as one now imagines, but rather quiet, simple boys with a dull look in their eyes, who mourned their comrades who fell that day. They sat there quietly and knew that it might be their turn to offer their lives the next day so that we here in Europe might live in freedom, friendship and peace.

"This is what we must tell the youth: the sacrifice these young Canadian soldiers freely gave for us ... they will always be remembered."

I believe, now that the Juno Beach memorial is there, not just for Canadians to see but for the world to see, they indeed will always be remembered. On behalf of New Democrats, not only here at Queen's Park but across Ontario, we will remember them and we are very proud of them and the sacrifice they made.

ORAL QUESTIONS

PROTECTION FOR HEALTH CARE WORKERS

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition):

My questions today are to the Premier. Today nurses came to the Legislature with a very simple message to you: they want a full, independent public inquiry to look into how we handled SARS in Ontario. They want the assurance that all the tough questions will be asked and answered through a full, independent, objective process conducted by an individual who is entirely removed from the government and who is equipped with all the tools necessary to get the job done: ask those questions, get those answers and provide all of us with the benefit of a road map so we can manage these things in the best way possible in the future.

Premier, my question to you is, why are you afraid to call for a full, independent public inquiry on the matter of SARS in Ontario?

Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): The reality is that we're not, and the reality is that we are right now talking to an individual of exactly that stature and asking for their input to the terms of reference of a full, open and public process so that the people of Ontario can understand exactly what happens in their health care system.

Mr McGuinty: Premier, I'm not sure what you're talking about, but I'll tell you what nurses are asking for and what I think we owe not only those nurses but all

Ontarians. A real public inquiry comes with whistle-blower protection; your internal review does not. A real public inquiry comes with the power to compel testimony; your internal review does not. A real public inquiry comes with the power to subpoena files; your internal review does not. A real public inquiry is conducted in public and is truly independent; your internal review is not.

If you are telling me that those are the characteristics that are to be found in what you're proposing to do, then you and I are talking about the same thing, and we can get on with the public's business of having a full, independent public inquiry. If you're not prepared to do that, then tell us why you are afraid to do so.

Hon Mr Eves: Perhaps the leader of the official opposition is confused. There is a review going on, headed by Dr Walker, of the public health care system's ability to respond to other situations like SARS in the future and to look at the SARS experience to develop proper procedures as we go forward.

That is not what we are talking about here. We are talking about coming out of a meeting that I held last week in my office with various representatives of health care professions and institutions in Ontario, having a full, open, public investigative process to look into what is going on, what has gone on in the health care system, and exactly how our health care system has the ability to respond.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): —weasel words.

Hon Mr Eves: I say to the honourable member from Windsor, if you want to refer to the individual who we are considering as a weasel, do that outside the House when he or she is appointed.

I find it absolutely despicable that the leader of the official opposition or any other member of this Legislature would stand up in this House and try to make a political issue out of what is a very public health care system in this province. You might want to wait until you see who the individual is, what the process is and what the terms of reference are before you start to criticize them, because you might be very embarrassed in very short order.

Mr McGuinty: I'm still trying to figure out why you are afraid to agree to a full, independent public inquiry. As to the politics, I'm trying to take the politics out of this. I'm trying to take it away from you and me and put it in the hands of an independent, objective commissioner who will get the job done. That's what we did in the matter of Walkerton. What we're talking about here is the same kind of process that was used subsequent to the Walkerton inquiry. I think that process served the people of Ontario very, very well. I think it was very effective at taking you, me and the leader of the third party out of the picture and having the matter given justice by an independent, objective commissioner.

Here are the questions: Why are you afraid of real whistle-blower protection? Why are you afraid of the power to compel testimony? Why are you afraid of the

power to subpoena files? Why are you afraid to have an inquiry that is full, independent and conducted in the face of the public? Why are you afraid of all those things?

Hon Mr Eves: Who said that there wouldn't be protection of people who appear? Who said that it wouldn't be a public process? Who is making this stuff up? Who is playing politics with people's lives?

You should be ashamed of yourself, standing up here, trying to score political points. We are trying to share information in the Ontario public health care system with the public, not score political points, which is more than I can say for you. You should be ashamed of yourself for standing up in the House.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): New question.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. We'll give the opposition leader time. The leader of the official opposition has the floor.

1420

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): I have a second question to the Premier. I want to return to the matter of the Ontario pension fund in that very unusual deal that was entered into with the single biggest contributor to your party. Let's go over the basic facts here.

Your party's biggest fundraiser lent your party's biggest donor millions of pension fund dollars. The deal is very unusual, both from an industry perspective and from the perspective of the Ontario pension fund itself. It is so unusual that the Ontario pension fund has never entered into this kind of deal since or before. We also learned last week that Mr Weiss for nine months was working both as a fundraiser for your party and as a member of the board of the Ontario pension fund. Fundamentally, this comes down to your leadership, your ethical standards, those that you set for yourself and your government.

I'm asking you, Premier, now that you fully understand those facts, if you believe there is nothing wrong there, that there was no conflict, and you feel it is fine for that to have happened on your watch.

Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I believe the Chair of Management Board has looked into this matter and has an answer to this question.

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Culture): I guess I could refer continuously to the Hansards of last week as well. I will tell you the same thing as I've said on numerous occasions: what we're concerned with here is whether or not due process was followed and whether or not due diligence was followed, and we're satisfied that that's the case.

Mr McGuinty: Premier, back to you. Ultimately, this is about your ethical standards. These cabinet ministers are responding to nothing more than the standards that you set for yourself and your government. I want to make

it clear at the outset that these are not our standards. We would not allow this kind of thing to happen under our government. Maybe this Premier feels this is OK, but we think it is wrong.

Premier, once more: your party's biggest fundraiser lends your party's biggest donor millions in pension fund dollars. The deal is very unusual for the Ontario pension fund itself and it is very unusual given industry standards for pension funds in this province. It is so unusual that the Ontario pension fund has never done this kind of deal before, nor has it done this kind of deal since. Mr Weiss was appointed to this position by your government. For nine months he acted in two capacities: both as fundraiser and as an individual on the board of the Ontario pension fund.

Here's another fact for you to consider today, Premier. We have learned that during that nine-month period in which Mr Weiss had a foot in both camps, \$21,300 was contributed by Mr Cortellucci's companies to your party. I ask you again, Premier: given that this has everything to do with your ethical standards and the standards you set for your government, do you see nothing at all wrong in these facts?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: The Leader of the Opposition is reaching a little bit here. First of all, for him to connect dots, there have to be some dots for him to connect.

Let's deal with the so-called unusual nature of these types of investments. As I reported last week, if we look at the industry standards, they were reported in Benefits Canada's report: of the top 100 pension funds in Canada, 1.7% of total assets are invested in mortgages for pension funds. In the case of the Ontario pension fund, this represents 0.3% of investments in mortgages, which is \$36.3 million. Clearly, in contrast with what the Leader of the Opposition is saying, the industry standards for investment in mortgages are much higher than for the Ontario pension plan.

You deal with facts. He hasn't listened to what I said last week. Obviously I'm giving the same facts today. Hopefully he doesn't return to the same thing again tomorrow. But these are facts reported by Benefits Canada.

Mr McGuinty: Premier, you can duck, you can bob, you can weave, but this is sticking to you. It's not a matter for the minister. This is ultimately a matter for you. This is a very, very unusual deal. This deal stinks. It's like an odour in an elevator: it's just not going to go away. It's going to hang around for a long time, and we'll keep bringing it back to you, because that's where the buck stops.

It is my understanding that you were going to provide strong leadership over there; you were going to set high standards; you were going to do things differently from your predecessor. Then tell us, Premier, what you intend to do about this deal. Are you going to allow this deal to stand? Are you going to say, "It is fine. This may have happened on my watch. We've appointed this guy. He was our biggest fundraiser. He may have received money from our biggest donor. This may be an exceptional deal, but as far as I'm concerned as Premier of Ontario, as

leader of this new government, there is not a damn thing wrong with this”?

Is that what you're telling us, Premier? Because if that is what you're telling us, I want to make it clear we have nothing to do with those standards. If you're such a strong leader, then stand up and say, “I will set this aside. I will not allow this to happen.”

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: I am trying to deal with facts here. It's unfortunate the Leader of the Opposition hasn't listened to the facts as stated last week, and he still seems to want to try to smear people. I would suggest you either listen to the facts or go out and speak as you think the facts are outside of the House and see how long you stand on your kind of facts when you try to smear people.

I get back to the facts. The fact of the matter is that the Ontario Pension Board has always had the power to invest in real estate mortgages. The authority to make these mortgage investments—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Come to order, please. Sorry to interrupt. Chair of Management Board.

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: Getting back to the facts, the authority to make these mortgage investments has existed unchanged since 1991. The board adopted an investment policy containing these elements in the Statement of Investment Policies and Goals in 1991. Clearly the authority was there to make these investments.

All I hear over there are all these spurious accusations. I would suggest that if the members of the opposition believe that these are true facts, they don't go under the protection of the Legislature there. Go out and make these facts, as you state them, outside there and see how long you stand on them.

SCHOOL SAFETY

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. Today, parents in Toronto are terrified that their children are not safe at school. A month ago we saw the terrible death of Holly Jones. We've heard reports of a man trying to abduct children on the street. Most recently, an intruder was found in Essex-Hawthorne public school trying to make contact with children.

Premier, your government has cut education funding. You've eliminated school principals and vice-principals. You've eliminated education assistants, caretakers, secretaries. We are told that these people are the eyes and ears in our schools. We're told that these people who have been cut in fact are needed to keep our children safe. Are you going to put more children at risk, or are you going to do something about these cuts which take these essential people out of our schools?

Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): Surely the leader of the third party is not suggesting that the government or anything this government has done led to the very unfortunate death of Holly Jones. Surely he is above that on the floor of this Legislature.

Contrary to what he would like people to believe, the government has not cut funding to education in this province. As a matter of fact, we have added considerably to funding in this province. It is now \$15.3 billion a year—when we started, it was \$12.9 billion a year—and we have committed to adding to that another \$1.9 billion in excess of what Dr Rozanski recommended in his report. So in his supplementary, he might want to correct the record on that issue, and he might want to remove any suggestion that the government is somehow responsible for the very unfortunate death and murder of Holly Jones. Surely he has the class to do that.

1430

Mr Hampton: Here is the reality: principals have been cut, vice-principals have been cut, caretaking staff have been cut and educational assistants have been cut, and now the Conservative-appointed supervisor, Paul Christie, wants to cut even more from those schools, the very school where the intruder was found. Lunchtime supervisors are supposed to disappear, more vice-principals are supposed to be cut and more caretakers are supposed to be cut.

Premier, I have two school-aged children. Like those other parents, I'm worried about what's going on when someone who is obviously trying to make contact with children can get into a school, and yet we know more cuts are scheduled. Are you going to put more children at risk, or are you going to recognize that the cuts you are proposing—the cuts Paul Christie wants to make in these very schools—will put more children at risk?

Hon Mr Eves: There have been no cuts to education in the province of Ontario; there have been billions of dollars added to education in the province of Ontario. With respect to the safety of schools, I think every member of this House would agree that schools should be as safe as possible. That's why our government introduced the Safe Schools Act. We're looking at ways to improve safety in our public education system all the time.

I say again to the honourable member that he might want to clarify that he's surely not suggesting that anything the government has done led to the very unfortunate death of Holly Jones.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Final supplementary?

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I talked to the mother whose child was approached by an intruder at Essex-Hawthorne public school. She's very distressed, and I know you understand that. I am distressed.

I am telling you that the cuts to education are not going by unnoticed by me, by this parent or by Dr Rozanski. Premier, you control the purse strings, not the board. The board spends according to what you give them. So you have made the cuts that are making it very difficult in our schools to have people such as educational assistants, caretakers, secretaries and vice-principals as the eyes and ears of school safety. You have to do more to reduce the threat and increase the safety of our children as much as you can. Responsible parents do not leave their children unattended; neither should you.

Tell this mother what you are going to do, Premier, to improve the safety of her child and every schoolchild in Ontario.

Hon Mr Eves: This is surely an all-time new low for members of the third party in this Legislature. Last year, the Toronto District School Board received \$60 million more than it received the year before. The proposed spending for this year is \$99 million more than last year. This year it is proposed that it will receive \$2.1 billion, a 5% increase over last year, which was an increase over the previous year, despite the fact that its enrolment declined by 4.2%.

To stand up in this House and say to the only government that's done something about safety in schools in the last 15 years in this province, and that has increased public school funding, including in Toronto, by billions of dollars since we've been the government, and try to leave the impression that somehow that resulted in the unfortunate murder and death of Holly Jones going home from a friend's house, is absolutely despicable. You might want to have the class to stand up and withdraw that ridiculous accusation on the floor of this Legislature, and you might want to go out there and repeat it.

PROTECTION FOR HEALTH CARE WORKERS

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I have a question for the Premier.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. Sorry. We'll start over. Come to order, please. The leader of the third party has the floor.

Mr Hampton: I believe that your cuts to education, particularly in Toronto, are putting children's safety at risk. But I want to ask you about a situation with nurses. Nurses today took the incredibly unusual step of coming here to Queen's Park wearing masks that say "Muzzled" on them and asking your government for a public inquiry under the Public Inquiries Act with whistle-blower protection so that nurses can tell the public the facts as they know them.

Premier, you have said you want to have a review. Nurses have said that is not good enough. Nurses want a public inquiry under the Public Inquiries Act, and they want whistle-blower protection so that those nurses who have been muzzled, who have been ignored and who have been silenced can come forward and tell the public the facts about SARS as they know them. Will you provide a public inquiry under the Public Inquiries Act with whistle-blower protection so those nurses can tell the public their facts? Yes or no?

Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I say to the leader of the third party that when he sees what sort of a public process, investigative process, we come forward with, he will see that people of all health care professions will be free to come forward and tell their story and will receive the protection they all deserve so that the people of Ontario can hear for

themselves what has happened in their health care system with respect to SARS in the province.

Surely the honourable member is not suggesting that somebody is guilty of some criminal activity with respect to the SARS outbreak in Ontario. What we want to do is to get the facts of how this SARS outbreak was treated and contained in the province, how information was shared under among different health care professions and institutions, and how we can do a better job in the future.

Mr Hampton: It is the very front-line nurses who have no confidence in the process you've outlined. It is the very front-line nurses, for example at Mount Sinai, who asked for protective equipment like these masks and were denied. It's the very front-line nurses who are saying that all of the procedures that need to be in place in terms of patient transfers are not in place. They don't have confidence in the process you have outlined so far. These are the nurses, many of whom are sick, many of whom are risking their lives, who are saying they do not have confidence in the process that you have outlined so far.

The question is, are you going to provide them with a public inquiry under the Public Inquiries Act with whistle-blower protection or not? That's what they want to know, and what you've outlined so far gives them no confidence. What's your answer?

Hon Mr Eves: If the leader of the third party was at the meeting last week, he will know I tried to convey to the House last week exactly—

Mr Hampton: —nurses on the front line. They were at the meeting.

Hon Mr Eves: He's talking about one group that was at the meeting. The Registered Nurses Association of Ontario was there. The Ontario Nurses' Association was there. The Ontario College of Nurses was there. The Ontario Medical Association was there. The College of Physicians and Surgeons was there. The Ontario Hospital Association was there. I say to the honourable member that they all agree that there should be a public process, that people in all health care professions should be free to come forward and talk about their experiences and the sharing, or lack thereof, with respect to SARS and how it was dealt with so that we can inform the public of Ontario as to exactly what went on with their health care system.

1440

The RAO was the only member in attendance who wanted to use the language of a public inquiry similar to Walkerton. The others, quite frankly, basically felt—

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): They weren't asked.

Hon Mr Eves: I say, with all due respect to the honourable member, you are incorrect. They were all asked to say whatever they wanted to say on this issue—

The Speaker: I'm afraid the Premier's time is up.

MINISTER'S EXPENSES

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): My question is for the Premier. It's also to do with standards. Premier, do

you think it's OK for one of your ministers to have a \$5,000-\$10,000 expense picked up, not by his ministry, but rather by a taxpayer-owned corporation? Do you think that's OK?

Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): If the honourable member is referring to the expense of the Minister of the Environment, he will know that the Minister of the Environment has done the appropriate thing and referred the entire issue to the Integrity Commissioner, who will give a totally independent and proper ruling on the issue.

Mr Bryant: Well, the Premier will know that the government sets the standards and the rules upon which the Integrity Commissioner adjudicates, and you will know that your bill that purported to cover off ministerial travel expenses, Bill 216, was supposed to fix all the loopholes. That's what the minister responsible said. He said, "The rules governing expenses have long been vague and inconsistently applied," and therefore the ministerial expenses involving travel were to be covered under Bill 216.

I say to you, Mr Premier, there's a huge honking loophole in this bill that you introduced. The Integrity Commissioner will be speaking to one bill, the Members' Integrity Act, and it's very convenient that the member wants him to look at that, but what I'm asking you to speak to is the bill that you introduced: the law that governs ministerial expenses. We cannot have public expenses diverted from public attention by having them picked up by taxpayer-owned corporations that are not subject to public disclosure.

Will you or will you not fill the loophole that permits the Minister of Energy to be a chauffeur of a limo paid for by Ontario Power Generation?

Hon Mr Eves: We introduced legislation that is far more restrictive and definite than any previous government in the history of the province of Ontario, which is more than I can say for your party when they were in government, I might add. You might want to stand up in this House and explain what happened when you were in government for five years, and you might want to go through it.

The reality is that there is an independent Integrity Commissioner. Surely the member's not questioning the integrity of the Integrity Commissioner, Mr Justice Coulter Osborne. Surely you can rely upon the opinion and the honesty and the independence of Mr Justice Osborne to give us a fair, independent and objective non-political review of the minister's expenses. We're prepared to do that. Why aren't you?

PROVINCIAL PARKS

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): My question today is for the Honourable Jerry Ouellette, the hard-working, effective, efficient Minister of Natural Resources who represents the riding of Oshawa. Minister, I, like you—

Interjections.

Mr Johnson: Maybe the member for Toronto Centre-Rosedale would like to listen—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. Take his seat. The member for Perth-Middlesex has the floor. Sorry to the member.

Mr Johnson: Minister, I, like you, and thousands of other Ontarians get very excited at this time of year. The weather is getting warmer and we feel the urge to get outside and enjoy the wilderness.

I, myself, satisfy this urge with an annual fishing trip. Many people like to camp, hike, canoe or simply head out to one of many provincial parks for a picnic.

However people use them, we have a world-class provincial park system right here in our own backyard. Minister, could you please inform us today on the status of our parks, and what kind of season 2003 is shaping up to be.

Hon Jerry J. Ouellette (Minister of Natural Resources): I thank the member for the question. All our parks, in every region of the province, are up and running and fully ready to go. We have 292 parks fully operational in the province of Ontario. Quite frankly, during this time of concern with what's taking place with tourism in the province, it's good to report that we have people from all around the world visiting our parks. This is the second year in a row that we are breaking records for reservations because people want to come to Ontario and participate in our great parks system.

Mr Johnson: It's a little bit off topic, Mr Speaker, but I just wanted to introduce Lutzen Riedstra and his son, Lutzen, in the members' east gallery. They are visiting from the Stratford archives, and we welcome them to the Legislature today. They like parks and things like that as well.

Minister, I must say that with the concerns about tourism, the impact of SARS on this huge industry, and other solemn concerns like mad cow disease, it is really great news to hear about our parks system and the way it is being utilized. That being said, how should people from my great riding of Perth-Middlesex or elsewhere go about getting their own campsite and what can they expect when they arrive there for their holiday?

Hon Mr Ouellette: There's a wide choice of activities that take place in all our parks, from swimming to hiking to canoeing. Whether it's Darlington, Ivanhoe, Silent Lake, or Algonquin and its 110th anniversary, there are all sorts of different activities for all sorts of people across the province.

The question was about getting on-line. OntarioParks.com is one of the ways that you can make your reservation in Ontario parks. Whether it's bringing your own trailers or tents, we've got electricity in them to provide a wide range of activities for all those individuals, both in Ontario and those visiting our great province.

EDUCATION TAX CREDIT

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is to the Premier. Last week I was at the

Toronto City Summit Alliance conference and I had the very good fortune to sit on a panel dealing with the matter of education, a panel that was moderated by former Premier Bill Davis.

You will know that Bill Davis spent most of his adult life championing and building a strong, sound system of public education in Ontario. He was very critical of your private school tax credit. He said, "I take exception to those who would view public education being, shall we say, fragmented by vouchers or charter schools."

Premier, you were a member in the Bill Davis government. Surely you must recall his passion for public education and the vision with which he inspired all of us when it came to that important ministry. Can you tell us, why is it that you have betrayed Bill Davis's vision for public education in the province of Ontario?

Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): There is no length to which the leader of the official opposition won't stoop today to try and leave misimpressions with the public. Bill Davis spoke about vouchers and charter schools. There is nothing that this government is doing that takes away from public education in Ontario.

We are spending billions more than David Peterson ever dreamt of spending on public education in Ontario. We have increased funding to public education dramatically, and we will continue to do it as we go forward in the future.

Mr McGuinty: I can tell you, Premier, I was there: he was talking about your tax credit. He was about 15 feet away from me. He was talking about your tax credit and he was very, very critical. This is a man who spent nine years as Minister of Education and 14 years as Premier. This man stands against your tax credit. This is the same tax credit that you yourself called ludicrous. You've abandoned the principles that he had set for Tories in the province and you abandoned your own principles when you decided that a tax credit that you yourself called ludicrous was somehow worthy of your support.

I ask you again, Premier: why is it that you have abandoned traditional Conservative Party principles when it comes to championing public education for all our children?

1450

Hon Mr Eves: That is not what Premier Davis was talking about, and the leader of the official opposition knows it. He was talking about vouchers and charter schools. That is not what former Premier Bill Davis says when he's talking to us about what his comments were and weren't.

I know you would like to exaggerate and use it to your political advantage, but that is not—

Mr McGuinty: He's against the tax credit. Phone him up and ask him.

Hon Mr Eves: We did, and that is not what he was talking about, and the leader of the official opposition knows it.

I will agree with him on this point: Bill Davis was one of the best education ministers Ontario has ever had, certainly far superior to anybody who was Minister of

Education in the Liberal regime of David Peterson. He was right up there with the current Minister of Education, Elizabeth Witmer.

ASSISTANCE TO TOURISM INDUSTRY

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): My question today is for the Minister of Tourism, the Honourable Brian Coburn. My beautiful riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka has been hit hard by the threat of SARS. The health unit and health care professionals have been doing an exemplary job in managing the situation, and for that they should be commended. However, as you know, our tourism industry has taken quite a hit. Can you tell me what support my riding can expect from our government?

Hon Brian Coburn (Minister of Tourism and Recreation): I thank the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka. Certainly his dedication and commitment to his residents puts him at the forefront in terms of accessing some of the ministry's programs.

We recognize that some of the health care challenges we have are not only in Toronto but throughout other parts of Ontario. That's why, on April 29, Premier Eves announced \$128 million as part of a recovery program for tourism in the province. Part of that recovery plan is the destination marketing partnership fund. That of course supports the destination marketing efforts we have in different areas of Ontario. The goal of the fund is to stimulate increased visitation by new visitors and re-energize and revitalize our communities to increase community confidence and spending.

This fund is certainly targeted to your riding as well, and the Georgian Bay marketing association would be able to apply for that funding. This helps to do things such as advertising, marketing, public relations activities and direct mail.

Another important initiative is—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I'm afraid the time is up. Supplementary?

Mr Miller: Thank you, Minister, for that answer. Our government certainly has stepped up to the plate to assist the tourism industry as a result of our recent challenges. I know the tax holiday, which has been put in place from, I believe, May 1 to September 30, will certainly help to stimulate business activity in the area.

Knowing that the Georgian Bay marketing association and Muskoka tourism can be assisted, what kind of help can individual operators expect in promoting their area and their events?

Hon Mr Coburn: We believe that greater recovery from SARS can be achieved through co-operation between tourism and marketing associations, individual businesses, community groups and municipal tourism organizations. That's why our funding programs are targeted at building these partnerships and strengthening them to achieve a greater impact in our communities from marketing efforts.

The member may also like to know that we have the event marketing and development fund as well, and that

encourages partnerships to increase attendance by new visitors and helps generate more economic activity. This fund also targets events or festivals and provides support in marketing efforts with the goal of improving long-term sustainability.

Event and festival organizations or strategic alliances between individuals and businesses, community organizations and others will have access to funds from these marketing efforts.

HYDRO DEREGULATION

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. Statistics Canada says that industries in Ontario now pay 75% more for deregulated hydro. Too many industries can't afford that. They're closing plants, they're laying off workers and they're cancelling expansions.

For example, in Thunder Bay, Buchanan Forest Products has laid off 400 workers. In Windsor, DaimlerChrysler has shelved plans for a 2,500-worker assembly plant and parts operation. In Orangeville, your own backyard, Manac closed its van plant and is sending 235 workers to Quebec, a province that has affordable, reliable public power.

Hydro deregulation is killing so many jobs that you could start a new club. You could call it Ernie and Dalton's Lost Jobs Ontario. How many jobs does Hydro privatization and deregulation have to kill before you admit that it's a bad strategy?

Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): It's interesting how the leader of the third party takes business decisions that are made for a whole host of reasons by individual businesses and automatically equates that all of them happen because of one single issue that he wants to champion on the floor of the Legislature and outside.

The honourable member knows perfectly well—he points to DaimlerChrysler, for example—that the decision DaimlerChrysler made with respect to a new plant does not have anything to do with respect to hydro prices. He also knows that most large corporations have their own separate deal with OPG, which produces power. He knows over the weekend that Daimler talked about redoing their fiscal forecast. They're going to be losing money in the North American Chrysler market. He also knows that DaimlerChrysler said that they will spend up to \$1.4 billion in Brampton or Bramalea to expand their operations. I'm sure he just forgot all those facts when he was asking his question.

Mr Hampton: You might want to try that answer with the Globe and Mail columnist Eric Reguly, who used to be a friend of yours, who says your hydro privatization and deregulation scheme is killing jobs. You might want to try your answer with the workers at Falconbridge in Timmins, or Tembec's Cochrane mill, or Weyerhaeuser's mills in Chapleau and Sturgeon Falls, or Buchanan's mills in Dubreuilville, where they say specifically that hydro prices are shutting them down, or Domtar's mill in White River.

A lot of workers know that their factory, their plant, their mill, can't afford to pay 75% more on the hydro bill. That's the issue. You can try to blame it on all kinds of other factors, but in mill after mill, factory after factory, plant after plant, workers and employers know that your hydro privatization and deregulation scheme is killing jobs. When are you going to admit it's a failure and recognize that public power, publicly owned, not-for-profit hydroelectricity, is the way to go? When are you going to admit that?

Hon Mr Eves: I know it is difficult for the leader of the third party to sit there on that side of the House and acknowledge that for the past eight years there isn't one jurisdiction in the entire Western world that has outperformed the growth in the province of Ontario. Not one. I know it pains him to sit there and know that 1,150,000 more people are working in Ontario today than were working in 1995. It also pains him to know that when his government was in power, 10,000 jobs were lost in Ontario. With all due respect to the leader of the third party and his political party, their thinking, their programs and their ideals, the reality is that by allowing the people of this province to keep more of their own money, there are 1,150,000 more of them working today than there were in 1995. We have a standard of living in this province and in this country second to none anywhere in the Western world.

WAYNE LEWIS'S RELEASE

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): My question is for the Minister of Public Safety and Security. Wayne Lewis was released from Maplehurst detention centre on Monday, June 2. On Thursday, June 6, he murdered 22-year-old Ellisse Phillips, former common-law wife to Lewis and a constituent of mine. Wayne Lewis then turned the gun on himself and committed suicide.

This man had a violent history of previous gun offences. He had been arrested regarding an incident with a gun and an ex-girlfriend. In July of 2000, he shot a man in Hamilton and left him paralyzed. One and a half years later, he was sentenced to four years and 10 months in jail. However, due to the conditions of the jail and the strike, the judge ruled that the time spent before sentencing would count as three to one in time. He served one year in a provincial institution.

Wayne Lewis should still have been in jail when he murdered Ellisse Phillips. Two things are clear: the provincial system failed and this violent offender should not have been released and there were very few restrictions on Wayne Lewis's parole when he was released. In view of the circumstances, Minister, will you agree to a full, independent, outside investigation into the circumstances regarding Wayne Lewis's release from a provincial jail?

1500

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Minister of Public Safety and Security): There's no question this is a tragic case and we want to extend our condolences to the family and friends of the victims in this situation.

As the member opposite knows, this is currently under investigation, not just by the police but the special investigations unit as well. Hopefully, you would understand that it would be inappropriate for me to comment on the circumstances surrounding this, as it is still under investigation. Following completion of that investigation, if there's a need for a further review by the ministry or the government, we will certainly be prepared to consider that.

Mr Agostino: The SIU is carrying out an investigation because of the fact that police were called to the scene and, just as they got there, the crime occurred. There is no trial upcoming; the man committed suicide. What we need is an outside, independent investigation into the circumstances regarding Ellisse. It has to be independent. Police are not allowed to investigate themselves. This is a serious matter. I don't think the ministry has the ability or should be able to investigate itself in this as well. The entire system has failed this young woman.

Hamilton detective Mike Thomas, who arrested Wayne Lewis, said, "Guns were a part of his life.... Lewis was a cold-blooded man. I always thought he'd kill or be killed." Probation and parole should have known that Lewis had a lengthy history of violent behaviour. There were few conditions attached to parole. We also learned that while in jail, he had a long history of violent behaviour against inmates and guards. There seems to be overwhelming evidence that this man was extremely dangerous. Did the Ontario parole know of this? What steps were taken upon his release?

Those are the types of questions to be asked, and again I urge you—this is independent of any police investigation. There will be no criminal charges here. The man killed himself. I urge you to call an independent investigation into the matter today, specifically into the release and the surrounding circumstances of this man's parole, and what actions were taken to protect the public from this violent offender.

Hon Mr Runciman: I have to get this clarified. My understanding was that the individual was on probation, not parole. I have asked for a review of the file with respect to the situation and the circumstances surrounding it but, beyond that, I don't think it would be appropriate to comment today.

PETERBOROUGH LIBRARY

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): My question is for the Minister of Culture. On Saturday, May 31, you and I had the pleasure of attending the official launch of the Peterborough Public Library's new initiative, the new TEKdesk, which provides technological support to library staff across the province 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

As MPP for the riding of Peterborough, I'm very pleased and indeed impressed by the innovative thinking demonstrated by the Peterborough library and wish to acknowledge the hard work and efforts of the staff: Ken

Doherty, library manager; Becky Rogers, head librarian, Bruce Roxburgh, project manager; Kevin Edwards, community opportunities innovative network; as well as all the TEKdesk support staff and library staff who helped make this happen. It is their vision that enables other libraries all over Ontario to have access to technical help at all hours of the day.

I am sure you know, Minister, that this type of assistance is invaluable, especially to those smaller remote, rural and First Nations libraries. Minister, can you tell this House a little bit more about this wonderful initiative?

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Culture): First, I'd like acknowledge the member for Peterborough's leadership on library issues, and in particular on behalf of his own library.

He is quite right; the Peterborough Public Library showed an extreme amount of leadership. They took a survey in 2001 to see what the needs of libraries were across the province. As you can appreciate, the needs of libraries in the smaller remote and northern areas are quite different than the larger libraries here in Toronto, for example, or even in York region. What they discovered is that in many of the small libraries they often have only one staff member and the rest are volunteers. So with respect to high-tech support, they haven't got access to it. What the Peterborough library did—and it went well beyond the bounds of Peterborough—was to have some sort of networking support province-wide, which is a great benefit to these smaller libraries.

I think this is something that is to be commended and I know it is going to be acted upon by many of the small libraries in our small communities across the province.

Mr Stewart: Thank you for your comments. I know that in addition to the TEKdesk, the Peterborough Public Library also took advantage of this initiative internally to digitize its own collection of images from the Balsillie Collection of the Roy Studio Images, which is housed in that library. The collection was acquired by the city of Peterborough in 2000, through the generous donation of Jim Balsillie. This collection comprises over 400,000 historical glass plate and film negatives. The original studio was established in 1896 in Peterborough, and for over three generations Roy photographers chronicled the history, people, industry and past times of the city and county. Minister, I wonder if you could tell the House just how important libraries like mine and collections that they house are to the people of Ontario.

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: In particular, this year, which is the 100th anniversary of the Archives of Ontario, I'd like to say that libraries are a tremendous repository of information and historical artifacts and history from across the province. Just a couple of weeks ago, I happened to go by the heritage centre in Markham and I picked up a book about the history of Scarborough written by the Reverend Bonis. The member for Scarborough East, who is a long-time Scarborough resident, and the member for Scarborough Centre, who is as well—the member for Scar-

borough Southwest is probably newer to Scarborough, he is younger than us, but the member for Scarborough-Agincourt will remember this. Reverend Bonis, who was a historian for Scarborough—my family moved to Agincourt 50 years ago—told us a lot, through the libraries, about David and Mary Thomson, the pioneer families and the Taber Hill First Nations burial ground. This is how libraries contribute to your community, preserving the history of our province and our communities and informing young people—although none of us are young people any more—across the province.

VISITORS

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Deputy Premier, Minister of Education): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd like to recognize the Ontario Parent Council in the gallery here today.

HOME CARE

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): My question is to the Associate Minister of Long-Term Care. I know you've received an invitation to come to Sudbury and explain to some of my constituents what they are supposed to do in order to survive once the homemaking services provided to them by our local CCAC are cut off on June 23. In the event that you refuse to come to Sudbury, can you please tell Pat Jones, who is in her late 50s and suffers from chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, is on oxygen and whose lungs are so severely damaged that she can't do this type of work, or Don McLeod, who is 37, has only one arm and one leg and is currently being treated by his doctor for fluid on his remaining arm, how they are supposed to access these necessary services, since both of them, very publicly at a press conference, have said they cannot afford to purchase them? They're waiting for your answer.

Hon Dan Newman (Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Helping to provide quality home care services to Ontarians is indeed a priority for this government. With respect to the member's question, the ministry has been in contact with the Manitoulin-Sudbury Community Care Access Centre and has been assured that the most important services that keep clients in their homes and allow them to maintain their independence are not affected by the changes to homemaking services. These unaffected services include personal support, such as bathing, help with eating, dressing and assistance with medications, as well as caregiver respite, which includes support for family members living with and caring for clients with a high level of dependency. As well, not all homemaking tasks are changing. Existing clients who can't go without help with meal preparation or laundry services will still receive the assistance they need from the Manitoulin-Sudbury Community Care Access Centre.

Mr Bartolucci: With all due respect, that's a cold, callous, cruel and crass answer. Three thousand people are affected in our area with your cut to homemaking

services. Tell Marion Doyon who has an ileostomy, is 82 years old, lives on a fixed income, can't afford to pay for these services and can't remain in her home without these services; or Pauline Ross, who has suffered two aneurysms, two strokes, two heart attacks, has one side of her body paralyzed and can't afford these services. These and 3,000 other people are going to have those services cut off. Tell them today what your advice is for them to be living independently.

1510

Hon Mr Newman: Again, not all homemaking tasks are changing. Existing clients who can't go without help with meal preparation and laundry services will still continue to receive the assistance they need.

I say to the honourable member across the way that our government is taking unprecedented steps to provide quality home care across this province, and that includes home care with community care access centres. The Manitoulin-Sudbury CCAC has seen its funding actually increase by 22% since 1995. Last year alone, the Manitoulin-Sudbury CCAC saw an increase of almost \$190,000 in new additional funding to help the people of that part of the province.

I will say that the ministry will continue to monitor the delivery of home care services by the community care access centre, and we will continue to work with them so clients can get the assistance they need.

In Ontario, we provide the broadest basket of home care services in Canada, the best home care in all of Canada, and we do it all without an income test or a means test.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS INFORMATION

Mr AL McDonald (Nipissing): My question is for the Minister of Labour. I understand your ministry is working hard to ensure that workers whose first language is neither French nor English understand their rights and responsibilities under the Employment Standards Act. Could you tell us what you are doing in this respect?

Hon Brad Clark (Minister of Labour): I want to thank the honourable member for the question.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Clark: Thanks to the member from Hamilton East also. I know he's keenly interested in this.

In a province as diverse as ours, many valued members of the workforce have a first language other than English or French. Our Employment Standards Act recognizes the need to provide services in languages that are not in English or French to those who need to understand their rights and responsibilities. If the majority language in a workplace is not English or French, the act requires the employer to post material from the ministry in the major language as well as English. We now have posters for the Employment Standards Act available in French and 10 majority languages—Arabic, Chinese, Greek, Italian, Polish, Portuguese, Punjabi, Spanish, Tamil and Vietnamese. The ministry has translated and

updated a general brochure on employer-employee rights and responsibilities under the ESA in all of these languages.

Mr McDonald: Minister, thank you for the information on the multilingual accessibility of the employment standards legislation. Knowing your rights is an important part of being safe on the job. Can you tell us what other initiatives your ministry is undertaking to ensure all of Ontario's workers understand their rights and responsibilities under the Employment Standards Act?

Hon Mr Clark: The ministry has published a guide to the Employment Standards Act and a variety of fact sheets on such topics as hours of work, overtime and minimum wage. These documents are available through the ministry Web site as well as ministry offices, government information centres and Publications Ontario. Special fact sheets have been prepared for agricultural workers and domestic workers which are translated into the 10 minority languages.

The ministry Web site and WorkSmartOntario include education material for young people about their rights and responsibilities under the Employment Standards Act. WorkSmartOntario is the first government Web site in Canada to offer young people comprehensive information about workplace health and safety, and employment standards such as hours of work, overtime and holiday pay. Extensive information for young employees on these rights and responsibilities is available at the government information centres, ministry offices and Publications Ontario, including the fact sheet entitled *What Young Workers Should Know*. Perhaps you might want to check it out.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Minister of Public Safety, your pistol-packing, gunslinger buddy Norm Gardner has found himself in hot water once again. He finds himself having been gifted with a \$1,500 revolver after setting up a deal for Para-Ordnance, the firearms manufacturer. He forgot to pay for it until he got caught and then cut a cheque, we're told, for but \$700 for a \$1,500 gun. You see, Mr Gardner actually shoots these things, and he shoots people with them.

Minister, do you think it's appropriate for your hand-picked appointee to the Toronto Police Services Board to be receiving gifts like this for arrangements he makes for Para-Ordnance and their participation in conventions, and have you called him to suggest that he might step down while the matter is being investigated?

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Minister of Public Safety and Security): Having sat in those seats for a few years, I understand the member's interest in raising this issue. But I think he would also appreciate that the Toronto Police Services Board has called on the Ontario Civilian Commission on Police Services to consider investigating the allegations surrounding Mr Gardner's conduct. As he knows, the board falls under the ambit of

the ministry for which I'm responsible, so it would be quite inappropriate for me to prejudice a decision that may be taken or will be taken by the civilian commission with respect to any personal opinion or view I might have.

VISITORS

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): I'm sure all of my colleagues will want to join me in welcoming students from St Martin school in Terrace Bay, led by principal Joy Magee. They are in the west gallery. Thank you for joining us today. It's good to see you.

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): I would like to introduce Susan Schrempf, who is sitting right up here in our gallery. She is the mother of Bridget Schrempf, who is one of our pages. She also runs the Chi-Cheemaun.

MEMBERS' ANNIVERSARIES

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): I'd like to congratulate the member for St Catharines on his 27th anniversary as an MPP in the Legislature today, and in light of that I'd like to seek unanimous consent to allow him to read as many petitions as he would like today.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): You are kidding. No?

Is there unanimous consent? I'm afraid I did hear some noes.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I would like to congratulate the member for Lanark-Carleton, who on this very same day is celebrating—I think it's our 26th, Norm, not our 27th.

Interjection: He was thinking one year from—

Mr Bradley: Oh, we're into the next year soon. OK. I'd like to have all members congratulate the member for Lanark-Carleton on being elected on June 9, 1977, in very difficult times to be elected, and serving so diligently for so many years.

PETITIONS

HOME CARE

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): This petition was gathered by an individual requiring homemaking services, from the Finlandia Hoivakoti, and it says:

"Whereas, we are outraged by the community care access centre's decision to cut homemaking services to seniors;

"Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned," 180 of them, "petition the Ontario Legislature to ensure these cuts do not take place."

SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas some motorists are recklessly endangering the lives of children by not obeying the highway traffic law requiring them to stop for school buses with their warning lights activated;

"Whereas the current law has no teeth to protect the children who ride the school buses of Ontario and who are at risk and their safety is in jeopardy;

"Whereas the current school bus law is difficult to enforce since not only is a licence plate number required, but positive identification of the driver and vehicle as well, which makes it extremely difficult to obtain a conviction;

"Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the measures contained in private member's Bill 112, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to protect children while on school buses, presented by Pat Hoy, MPP, Chatham-Kent Essex, be immediately enacted....

"The Bill 112 imposed liability on the owner of a vehicle that fails to stop for a school bus that has its overhead red signal lights flashing....

"And we ask for the support of all members of the Legislature."

This is signed by a number of residents from Kingsville, Cottam, Leamington and surrounding areas.

1520

HIGHWAY 407

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition that reads as follows:

"Whereas motorists using Highway 407 are being gouged with charges that are far beyond what is reasonable and justified;

"Whereas billing errors are forcing motorists to spend hours on the telephone trying to have such errors corrected;

"Whereas some motorists in frustration and exasperation are paying charges they did not incur for the use of Highway 407;

"Whereas the government of Ontario acts as an enforcer for the Highway 407 Corp and is, in our view, complicit in the collection of questionable charges;

"Whereas the Eves-Harris government sold Highway 407 to a buyer who has increased charges well beyond what the government promised;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the Legislative Assembly to condemn the Conservative government of Ontario for selling Highway 407 to private interests and for permitting the Highway 407 Corp to raise charges for the use of the highway and other administrative charges that cannot be justified."

I affix my signature; I'm in complete agreement.

HYDRO RATES

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): I have a petition here which is addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it deals with skyrocketing electricity bills.

"Whereas electricity bills have skyrocketed under the Harris-Eves government's flawed electricity plan; and

"Whereas some consumers have signed higher fixed-rate contracts with retailers, without adequate consumer protection; and

"Whereas the Harris-Eves government has failed to address electricity supply shortages in Ontario, forcing the purchase of American power at premium prices, driving up prices still further; and

"Whereas the Harris-Eves government appointed a board of directors for Hydro One that has been paying themselves extravagant salaries, compensation packages and severances for senior executives; and

"Whereas Hydro One bought 90 municipal utilities, serving about 240,000 people across Ontario, at premium prices and with borrowed funds. These purchases with borrowed funds have increased Ontario's debt burden; and

"Whereas the Harris-Eves government has added additional fees and taxes to local electricity distribution companies. These charges have also been passed along to consumers;

"Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, demand that the Harris-Eves government take immediate action to ensure that Ontarians have fair and reasonable prices for the necessary commodity of electricity in Ontario and that the Harris-Eves government and its leader, Ernie Eves, call a general election on the instability of the energy market so that Ontarians will have a voice on this issue."

I totally agree with the petition and have signed it accordingly.

HIGHWAY SAFETY

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I have a petition signed by around 100 students from Central Algoma Secondary School.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Highway 17, known as the Trans-Canada Highway, between Ripple Rock on the west and Mink Point Road on the east in the township of Johnson, is unsafe, particularly in light of the fact that school buses enter and exit on to this stretch of the road to serve a secondary school of 650 students and an elementary school of 150 students; and

"Whereas there have been several accidents, the latest of which resulted in the fatality of a 16-year-old male;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Transportation do immediately make changes to the signage, speed limit, width of lane and/or install caution lights in order to make this section

of this highway safer for our students as well as for all travellers on this section of the highway.”

I agree with this petition and affix my signature.

SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas some motorists are recklessly endangering the lives of children by not obeying the highway traffic law requiring them to stop for school buses with their warning lights activated;

“Whereas the current law has no teeth to protect the children who ride the school buses of Ontario, and who are at risk and their safety is in jeopardy;

“Whereas the current school bus law is difficult to enforce, since not only is the licence plate number required but positive identification of the driver and vehicle as well, which makes it extremely difficult to obtain a conviction;

“Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the measures contained in private member’s Bill 112, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to protect children while on school buses, presented by Pat Hoy, MPP, Chatham-Kent-Essex, be immediately enacted....”

The bill imposes “liability on the owner of a vehicle that fails to stop for a school bus that has its overhead red signal lights flashing; and....

“We ask for the support of all members of the Legislature.”

I continue to receive these petitions from across Ontario. This one is signed by residents of Acton.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): I have a petition that was forwarded to me by Kara-Lee Potter, who is the secretary of the Spruce Lodge resident advocacy council in Stratford, Ontario. It states:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Eves government has increased the fees paid for by seniors and the most vulnerable living in long-term-care facilities by 15% or \$7.02 per diem effective August 1, 2002; and

“Whereas this fee increase will cost seniors and our most vulnerable more than \$200 a month; and

“Whereas this increase is 11.1% above the rent increase guidelines for tenants in the province of Ontario; and

“Whereas the increase in the government’s own contribution to raise the level of long-term-care services this year is less than \$2 per resident per day; and

“Whereas, according to the government’s own funded study, Ontario ranks last amongst comparable jurisdictions in the amount of time provided to a resident for nursing and personal care; and

“Whereas the long-term-care funding partnership has been based on government accepting the responsibility to fund the care and services that residents need; and

“Whereas government needs to increase long-term-care operating funding by \$750 million over the next three years to raise the level of service for Ontario’s long-term-care residents to those in Saskatchewan in 1999; and

“Whereas this province has been built by seniors, who should be able to live out their lives with dignity, respect and in comfort in this province;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Demand that Premier Eves reduce his 15% fee increase on seniors and the most vulnerable living in long-term-care facilities and increase provincial government support for nursing and personal care to adequate levels.”

I agree with it, and I’ve signed the petition accordingly.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the auto industry accounts for approximately 50% of Ontario exports to the United States, supports another three or more jobs elsewhere in the economy and contributes billions of dollars in tax revenues to governments; and

“Whereas the auto industry is the economic lifeblood of communities, such as St Catharines, Oshawa, St Thomas, Alliston, Windsor, Oakville, Cambridge, Kitchener and Waterloo; and

“Whereas the auto industry has experienced job losses and seen challenges due to competition from industries in Mexico, the recent recession in the United States and delivery problems at Ontario’s borders; and

“Whereas the prosperity of the province of Ontario is dependent in large part on an auto industry that is competitive and dynamic; and

“Whereas select committees of the Legislature tend to be task-oriented and non-partisan in their deliberations;”

We, the undersigned, ask “that the Ernie Eves government convene a select committee on the Ontario auto industry that consults with labour, business and the public in a timely fashion to address the challenges and opportunities that the engine of Ontario’s economy will be facing in the future.”

I affix my signature; I’m in complete agreement.

SCHOOL SAFETY

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas guaranteeing the safety and security of our children is universally recognized as absolutely essential by all people in the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas the ability of Ontario's schools to provide adequate levels of safety and security for Ontario's children has been called into question by recent incidents in which children have been attacked by individuals who have gained illegal entry to schools; and

"Whereas parents and school officials want to make physical changes to make our schools safer; and

"Whereas parents and school officials are concerned about the loss of educational assistants, custodians, lunchroom supervisors, librarians, physical education teachers, computer lab instructors, music instructors, vice-principals and other supports staff, who are the eyes and ears of our schools; and

"Whereas the lack of money for staffing and capital repairs is a direct result of the disastrous education funding formula adopted by the Conservative government;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"(1) That the government of Ontario immediately institute a school safety fund that will provide schools with adequate funding to make necessary renovations that are required for school safety.

"(2) That the new education minister immediately amend the Conservative education funding formula to allow for adequate education funding that will provide funds for adequate staffing, building repairs and quality education."

This petition was put together after a child was sexually assaulted in a school in my riding. I will affix my signature to this petition.

1530

HYDRO RATES

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"The Harris-Eves government has mismanaged the electricity policy of the province of Ontario.

"Mike Brown, MPP, has been fighting for rural rate assistance.

"The Ernie Eves government forces Great Lakes Power customers to pay into a fund for rural rate assistance, and rural rate assistance would reduce the distribution bills for customers by hundreds of dollars each year.

"Therefore I support the efforts of Mike Brown, MPP, to have rural rate assistance extended to the GLP service area immediately."

This petition is signed by hundreds of people from places like Goulais River, St Joseph Island, Desbarats and Bruce Mines.

SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): I continue to receive these petitions. This particular set was signed by residents of Windsor:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas some motorists are recklessly endangering the lives of children by not obeying the highway traffic law requiring them to stop for school buses with their warning lights activated; and

"Whereas the current law has no teeth to protect the children who ride the school buses of Ontario, and who are at risk and their safety is in jeopardy; and

"Whereas the current school bus law is difficult to enforce since not only is the licence plate number required, but positive identification of the driver and vehicle as well, which makes it extremely difficult to obtain a conviction;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the measures contained in private member's Bill 112, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to protect children while on school buses, presented by Pat Hoy, MPP, Chatham-Kent Essex, be immediately enacted.

"The bill imposes liability on the owner of a vehicle that fails to stop for a school bus that has its overhead red signal lights flashing, and we ask for the support of all members of the Legislature."

I too have signed this petition.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): Another petition on our education system and the cuts:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Progressive Conservative government promised in 1995 not to cut classroom spending, but has already cut at least \$1 billion from our schools and is now closing many classrooms completely; and

"Whereas international language weekend classes are a needed part of learning for many students in our area; and

"Whereas the Education Act, specifically regulation 285(5), mandates provision of these programs where demand exists; and

"Whereas the Conservative funding formula is forcing the Toronto District School Board to cancel these Saturday classes for groups who want this programming;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to instruct the Minister of Education to restore meaningful and flexible funding to the Toronto school boards to ensure that they are able to continue to accommodate these Saturday international languages classes."

I will affix my signature to this petition because I fully support it.

VISITOR

The Acting Speaker (Mr David Christopherson): The time for petitions has expired. Before I call orders of the day, I want to draw to the attention of members the presence, in the members' gallery, of Mr Ron Hansen, the former member for Lincoln, who was here during the 35th Parliament. Welcome, Ron.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

2003 ONTARIO BUDGET

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 26, 2003, on the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr David Christopherson): We are beginning debate with the third party.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: I didn't get that ahead of time. If there's a problem, check it with the table and I'll make any changes if that's not correct, but my understanding is that it is indeed going to the third party. Therefore, the member for Niagara Centre now has the floor.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Let's recall which budget we're talking about. This is the bogus budget. This is the contemptuous budget. This is the budget that was delivered up at the auto parts plant, far, far away from Queen's Park and the Legislative Assembly, at the auto parts plant of one of Mr Eves's wealthy buddies, one Frank Stronach, who moaned and groaned about his oh-so-modest income. He was at a shareholders' annual general meeting and Mr Stronach moaned and groaned about his oh-so-modest income of—what was it, Ms Churley?—some \$56 million last year.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): Something like that.

Mr Kormos: That's his personal income. I'm not talking about corporate income; his personal income. This same bogus budget, this contemptible, contemptuous budget, put another \$3.5 million in Mr Stronach's pocket like that; more tax cuts for Ernie Eves's wealthy friends. But what is most significant is the people who were ignored, the people who were denied any relief in this budget.

Just this weekend, like everybody else, I was doing all sorts of fascinating and wonderful things in my riding down in Niagara Centre. On Saturday, I was at the annual review of the air cadet squadron in Thorold over at Monsignor Clancy school. The Thorold air cadet squadron had six decades of history at Thorold high school, with the public board. You will recall me asking the then Minister of Education in this Legislature why it was that she threw them out of that historic home of theirs at Thorold high school. That's what happened. Because the public board had been defunded by this government, Thorold high school shut its doors to the Thorold air cadet squadron—incredible. This government had little to say that provided any relief for those young women and men—bright, capable young people—impressive as all get out, I've got to tell you.

Out of the 30 or so members of that squadron, 20-plus are going on summer training courses. One young warrant officer is going to London on an exchange—not taxpayer-funded—and, quite frankly, he'll be living in far more modest circumstances while in London and travelling about England than did our Minister of the Environ-

ment when he was there on his junket as Minister of Energy, as we talked about last Thursday. Two other young cadets are taking flight training, one taking air traffic control training, and dozens are going up to Trenton—you're familiar with Trenton—taking any number of leadership courses and basic training. These are bright, disciplined, skilled, ambitious young women and men.

It was with regret on Saturday that I learned that now the Catholic board is forced to begin charging this air cadet squadron rent for use of the facilities at Monsignor Clancy. Where I come from, folks who pay taxes—and they do—expect those public buildings like our schools to be safe for their kids when their kids are in them. You heard that being addressed today, that this government, yes, has created a serious state of risk, especially in our elementary schools, because of the destaffing of those schools: vice-principals, gone; custodians, gone; secretaries, gone; teachers' aides, gone; specialized teaching staff like music teachers, gone. We've had some horrifying instances just recently here in the city of Toronto of kids being accosted by strangers who have managed to penetrate those schools and get into the hallways because of the destaffing. So our schools have been left in not just a sad and regrettable but dangerous state as well.

Then to top it off, as I said, I learned on Saturday that this air cadet squadron, these young people doing so well, doing such a great job, like so many other young people—as members of the cadet movement or the scouting or Girl Guide movement—are going to be called upon to pay rent from what are incredibly modest resources that they work with. Yes, when the young warrant officer from that squadron is in London, England, I have no hesitation in telling you that nobody's going to be picking up a \$10,000 tab for his so-called ground transportation, like Mr Stockwell, then-Minister of Energy, was the beneficiary of.

Ten grand for a week of ground transportation: what the heck was he travelling around in? Holy zonkers, I've been to Europe and I know the euro is a pretty high comparative rate to the Canadian dollar, but \$10,000 for a week buys you some pretty luxurious wheels. I couldn't even begin to think whether it's a Bentley or a Rolls or a Lamborghini, or one of those exotic, undoubtedly not North American-made cars that the then Minister of Energy, Mr Stockwell, was being escorted around in. Is he sitting back there, you know, with the plush leather and the window divider between him and the chauffeur up front? Did Mr Stockwell refer to him as Jeeves with that sort of WASPy arrogance that only Mr Stockwell manages to be able to conjure up?

1540

I can just see him there, puffing on the big cigar at taxpayers' expense, and the Waterford crystal glasses rattling ever so slightly as the Rolls limo goes over the occasional speed strip, but not enough to spill a drop of the expensive cognac or Scotch or Armagnac that the Minister of Energy was being wined on during this taxpayer-sponsored tour of Rome, Paris, London—and was

it Glasgow that was added to that itinerary, Mr Gill? Mr Gill, did you accompany the Minister of Energy when he was on that taxpayer-funded junket through Europe?

Mr O'Toole, you haven't come back with an affected French accent that would reveal the fact that somehow you were his consort during this taxpayer-funded, plush tour of the capitals of Europe. I'm not sure, but I don't think Mr Spina went. I doubt if Mr Wettlaufer was Mr Stockwell's companion for the two weeks.

Somebody had to go, because they blew 27,000 bucks on airfare alone—27 grand. Just how big is this entourage? You've got Middle Eastern sheiks and royalty who travel about the world with smaller entourages than Mr Stockwell must have had on that junket through Europe. That's 27 grand of taxpayers' money on airfare alone.

I'm not sure, but I don't think this was the charter that you and I are inclined to fly on from time to time, you know, where our knees are up to our chin and where our neighbours are overflowing—just as we're overflowing our seats, they're overflowing into ours—and we get that package of lacklustre and rather stale peanuts mid-flight. I just don't think that Mr Stockwell, the Minister of Energy, as he was then, now Minister of the Environment, was travelling carriage class when you're talking about 27 grand. He certainly wasn't staying at bed and breakfasts. He wasn't staying at the local student hostel by any stretch: 500 bucks a pop for hotel rooms; 500 bucks a night for hotel rooms.

I've watched movies; I've read novels. I would have no idea what one looks like myself, but 500 bucks a pop buys you a pretty classy hotel room. I think it buys you a suite. I think it buys you a butler and a maid and in-room, in-suite dining. I think you've got expensive Persian carpets on the floors and the finest of antique furniture as a bedside table at 500 bucks a night. But I suppose for a minister of the crown who's travelling about at taxpayers' expense, once you leave the finely crafted leathers of the Rolls, you just couldn't bring yourself to book into a mere one- or two-star accommodation. You've got to go big or go home; you go five-star.

Mind you, it was something of a swan song; it was something of a farewell tour. It seems to me that he was a lame-duck Minister of Energy, because it wasn't too long after this extravagant, plush, posh tour of Europe on the taxpayers' tab that he was no longer Minister of Energy. That's why today we tabled some legislation and got first reading on it; it's a junkets bit of legislation.

I think it's time for the junket junkies to go cold turkey and get some rehab. The junkets legislation will solve the little bit of an impasse we have here, because the minister seems to have had a little bit of a memory lapse where he's not quite sure how much of it OPG paid for and how much of it the taxpayers paid for directly, as compared to indirectly through OPG, because it's six of one and half a dozen of the other.

He didn't seem, as far as I know from reading the press reports from one Martin Mittelstaedt, who was slandered and libelled by Mr Stockwell as a prevaricator, a liar—that's what a prevaricator is. Mr Stockwell said

that the author of that news report in the *Globe and Mail*, one Martin Mittelstaedt, prevaricated and fabricated. Well, please. Everybody's wrong but Mr Stockwell? Everybody's not telling the truth? This is the world's biggest conspiracy since the grassy knoll conjecture when President Kennedy got himself shot. Surely Mr Stockwell is the victim of the biggest conspiracy ever concocted, according to his version of these events.

The junket registry would also simply require those who take off on grand tours like Mr Stockwell enjoyed to file a complete list of all expenses, a list of who it was that accompanied and, oh yes, an itinerary, the remarkable thing about the Stockwell junket: Mr Stockwell at the Trevi Fountain throwing the coins in, sitting at the bottom of those Spanish Steps, walking along the River Thames, passing Big Ben and Westminster and the lovely sights of London and, my goodness, Paris—the Latin Quarter, the Left Bank, those quaint but oh-so-expensive bistros with their \$80 lunches and their \$200 and \$300 bottles of wine, the elevator ride to the top of the Eiffel Tower so that one can see the sights unimpeded by storefronts and building façades, perhaps a little risqué side trip to the Moulin Rouge to see—what are they called; the Folies Bergères?

Ms Churley, help me.

Ms Churley: I wouldn't know. I've never been there.

Mr Kormos: This is big-ticket stuff. This can exhaust a gold card. This is platinum card turf. And the sad thing is, Mr Stockwell didn't even say thank you to the taxpayers out there, folks like the people down where I come from, for sending him off on this farewell tour, nor is he prepared to tell us exactly what he learned during those two weeks touring the capitals of Europe that made him more effective as a Minister of Energy and perhaps now as Minister of the Environment, in view of the fact that this was very much a farewell tour.

There's nothing in the budget, nothing at all, speaking to those lowest-paid workers in our province, those women and men—mostly women; understand this—working at minimum wage. The number is increasing. The largest single chunk of them are single moms working at minimum wage, stuck at \$6.85 an hour for the last eight years plus.

During the NDP government from 1990 to 1995, minimum wages were raised four times. The minimum wage has not been increased by a penny since 1995, when the Tories seized power here in the province of Ontario. Minimum wage workers are stuck at \$6.85 an hour. In fact, their income has eroded by 20% because of the impact of inflation and the cost of living over the course of the last eight years. Not a penny for the lowest-paid workers—not a penny. I think that's a shame. That is a crime.

Not a word of comfort to pensioners, who have seen their pensions eroded by stock market scams, stock market schemes, by the likes of John Roth and others. Remember John Roth of Nortel? He went home with millions. He undoubtedly is going to get a significant property tax break, probably to the tune of \$10,000,

\$20,000, \$30,000 or \$40,000. John Roth went home with millions after ripping off little shareholders whose brokers were still selling them Nortel at 50 bucks on the way down. I think it's enjoyed something of a recovery. What's it now, \$3 or \$3.50? John Roth walked away with millions. He killed thousands of jobs, gutted a company that had been a stable and significant part of our telecommunications industry here in this country—well, it was—and left oh-so-many pensioners, and seniors in general, wondering where the next month's rent cheque or grocery bill payment was going to come from.

1550

The budget said nothing to persons with disabilities. Just like those on social assistance, they've been stuck at their sub-poverty levels of income since 1995: not a penny in increase.

Ms Churley: It decreased in 1995. Remember?

Mr Kormos: Social assistance recipients were slashed by 21.6%, just shy of 22%. And think about this: over the course of the last eight years they've suffered another 20% erosion in the buying power of those meagre and, again I say to you, criminal allowances. They were cut 22% helter-skelter in the first instance by this government, and they've been cut another 20% over the course of the last eight years by virtue of this government's failure to respond to their dire need.

I fear there are precious few government members who have actually seen how an ODSP recipient or a person on social assistance is forced to survive here in the city of Toronto, where rents are outrageous because this government has abandoned any concept of rent control and let the landlords run free rein. Even in small-town Ontario, where I come from, where our northern colleagues come from, social assistance and ODSP levels are literally unlivable. They are. You find kids living in poverty, poverty forced upon them, foisted upon them by this government.

New Democrats are proposing practical solutions. They are. We think our junket registry is a practical solution to the problem that Mr Stockwell has created by his European fling. We believe in practical solutions.

We believe the minimum wage has to be increased immediately to eight bucks an hour, with an annual review so minimum-wage workers never again fall behind like you, Mr Gill, and your colleagues have forced them to over the course of the last eight years.

That's why we believe there's a need for meaningful pension reform in this province so that every worker is a party to and a participant in a fixed benefit pension plan, a pension that becomes vested immediately, a pension that is portable and indexed. When I was a kid, in the 1950s, folks worried about not living long enough. Now all of us in our constituency offices are meeting folks who are worried about living too long.

Mr Eves has a solution, he says. He goes to a nursing home and as much as tells the residents, "Get off your duffs and get out there and get a job." That's what he said to them. "We don't need a retirement age of 65 in this

country." Incredible, the arrogance to go into a nursing home to tell our folks and our grandfolks—

Ms Churley: Did he go into a nursing home and say that?

Mr Kormos: Ernie Eves went to a nursing home to tell our folks and our grandfolks living out their final months and years to get off their duffs and go get a job.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Who said that?

Mr Kormos: Ernie Eves told old folks, our folks and our grandparents, "Get off your butts and go out there and get a job. Forget about the 65 retirement age." Where I come from, people work darned hard, and they fought hard over the course of decades and generations to ensure a retirement age that allows them to live out their senior years and enjoy their grandkids and help raise them. They fought hard for pensions, like the Inco workers down in Port Colborne whom I joined on Friday morning fighting for pensions.

New Democrats are fighting for pensions too. We're fighting for a better minimum wage; we're fighting for better benefits for social assistance and ODSP recipients. We're not going to support this budget. I thought you got that impression clearly, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Members now have up to two minutes for questions or comments.

Hon Brad Clark (Minister of Labour): I don't know where to begin with the member for Niagara Centre. Every day that he comes in this House he has another conspiracy theory of some type. I honestly believe you must believe The X-Files is a real program, that it's real TV. The most recent one he walked in here with was that he was haranguing me the other day about the towels in my washroom. You can't win with this guy. If we had paper towels, we'd be insulting the environment because we were using disposable paper towels. If you use reusable towels, then you're insulting someone else. You simply can't win with him.

His preposterous statement that the Premier of Ontario was telling seniors that they had to go back to work—give me a break. Surely to goodness the member can't honestly believe that, when the Human Rights Commissioner himself has stated that there should be a ban on mandatory retirement. I don't understand this. The member for Niagara Centre historically will hold up the Human Rights Commissioner to such a platform, stating that this individual can make no errors, and this man states that we should ban mandatory retirement, that it is wrong. Now you turn around and you want to enforce mandatory retirement. You seem to pick the people you want to support and use them to your advantage to support your conspiracy theories, which is quite common actually.

The comments he made about the minimum wage: again, the member knows quite honestly that economists on both sides of the coin, whether they support increasing the minimum wage or not, will state that there is a risk to job opportunities if you increase the minimum wage. So this government on this side decided to cut taxes to low-

pay earners. We cut taxes; 825,000 minimum wage earners and low-income earners are no longer paying provincial taxes. That's something they didn't do when they were in office. They raised their taxes.

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I want to follow up on the comments of the member for Niagara Centre. I just say to the public, this is the campaign document that the Conservatives ran on the last time, 1999, and it promised these tax cuts. It says here under property tax cuts, "We'll cut the provincial portion of residential property taxes by 20%.... This cut will put \$500 million back in the hands of individuals and families."

Well, guess what? They didn't. They've cancelled half of it. They said, "We're not going to go ahead with this." As a matter of fact, they said, "We'll make it mandatory for owners of rental units to pass on their savings to tenants through lower rents." Well, it was all just a fraud. They didn't do that at all. The minister said just last week, "We've decided to cancel that tax cut." Surprise, surprise.

Then it was just a year ago that the Eves government got up and said, "Listen, we're sorry, we're not going to go ahead with \$1.5 billion worth of tax cuts that were scheduled for January 1, 2003"—five months ago. Why? Because they couldn't afford it. There wasn't the money there.

I always carry this document around: On the Right Track. This has Mr Eves's picture on the front. They had to abandon the Taxpayer Protection Act. Then they said, "Here's our explanation." They said, "How can the government justify breaking the Taxpayer Protection Act by delaying tax cuts?" They admitted they had to break their own fundamental Taxpayer Protection Act. The reason they did it was—they quoted Moody's—"To meet the target of a balanced budget, the government was forced to delay scheduled reductions in a number of tax rates."

I say to my colleague from Niagara Centre, who talked about schools charging more money for school use, take the promises of the Eves government with a grain of salt. Here we are a few weeks before an election, with more tax cut promises that they can't afford.

Ms Churley: I'm pleased to comment on the comments of my colleague the member from Niagara Centre. I noticed with interest the response from the labour minister to the member from Niagara Centre. I think essentially what he said was, "You pick which side you're on." I think we're all proud to say over here that, yes, we picked the side that we're on.

1600

What the member for Niagara Centre was talking about was that the New Democratic Party of Ontario stands up for the low-wage workers in this province. We stand up for an increase in minimum wage that this government, who has seen fit to give all MPPs in this place a big raise, has chosen to ignore since they were elected in 1995, to give one penny—add one penny—to minimum wage, to the lowest-paid workers in this

province. That's what the member for Niagara Centre was talking about.

He was talking about the pitiful conditions in which our disabled population live in this province and their desperate need for an increase, and they can't get it from this government. That's what the member for Niagara Centre was talking about.

He was talking about single moms who are trying to raise their kids and pay their exorbitant rents in this city—and across this province now—and feed their kids. They can't do it. That's the side that New Democrats stand for, not the Frank Stronachs of the world who, thank you very much, have more than enough money. The budget, the bogus budget that this government just recently announced, is putting how much more money into Frank Stronach's pocket?

Mr Kormos: It's \$3.5 million.

Ms Churley: Yes, \$3.5 million, while the lowest-paid workers in this province are being ignored, while tenants are paying more and more for rent, while our schools are losing more and more of the educators and the eyes and ears that keep them safe. That's the kind of side that New Democrats stand for, and we're proud of it.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It's my pleasure to respond to the always humorous and never serious member from Niagara Centre. I'm alarmed to have to stand and hold him accountable—because he will get two minutes here—in terms of why he didn't talk about the substantial improvements to the lives of people in Ontario. I'm almost speechless.

More importantly, I think that he failed to talk about the important constituents of mine who I think of often, the senior citizens, and the tax break that was offered in our budget for that group. I think one of the things that I hear most about is the commitment to challenge the threat of cancer in people's lives. The \$1 billion that has been committed there is something that I believe is setting the standards very high, and I believe our Premier is certainly up to that job.

Again, he did talk, in an indirect way, about waste, and that's certainly something that this government has been wrestling with. We often refer to the extravagant spending over the years by the opposition and the third party on unnecessary processes. I think the NDP know all too well, at the end of the day when we were elected in 1995, that they were spending in excess of \$11 billion each year more than they were taking in as revenue. Almost 20% of their expenditures were in excess of revenue. We were met with that when we were elected in 1995, and it did take us a couple of years to get down to the balanced budget.

The hallmark of this government is to be prudent, to make the right decisions and to put the people of Ontario first. He didn't mention any of this, and I suspect in his two-minute wrap up he will probably get to the budget debate and mention something of context.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Niagara Centre now has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr Kormos: First, it was so refreshing to see and hear the member for Durham, Mr O'Toole, rise and join

us in our condemnation of Mr Stockwell and his outrageous abuse of taxpayer dollars. It's a pleasure, quite frankly, to know that there are some Tory backbenchers who see that Minister Stockwell's abuse of taxpayers' dollars is worthy of condemnation.

I was rather surprised by the Minister of Labour resurrecting the towel scandal here in the Legislature.

Interjection.

Mr Kormos: Well, I thought he would have wanted it to be put to rest. We blew the whistle on him last week, the sweetheart deal with a scab company that has an open-ended contract where they can double and triple and quadruple the price. These are not the sort of hand towels that workers in real workplaces dry their hands with. We're talking about 100% Egyptian combed cotton, the plushest of towels and the finest of—

Laughter.

Mr Kormos: Well, we are—the finest of laundry services. Perhaps Mr Stockwell brought back some of those expensive perfumed French soaps from Paris, maybe some bath salts, perhaps some bubble bath so that when Mr Clark, the Minister of Labour, has to clean up after a hard, sweaty day in the cabinet room, he can bathe in the finest lavender scents that only the fine suppliers and purveyors of Paris can provide.

Perhaps it was at a brief stop at Harrods in London where Mr Stockwell brought back some modest little souvenirs, again from the expensive rack of perfumes, scents and colognes at high-priced department stores, so that after cleansing himself, Mr Clark can apply these plushest of towels to his tender body and not generate a rash or a scratch and dab himself dry as he heads off home.

Why doesn't he try putting the towels in a duffle bag and laundering them at home like other people do instead of charging them out to private scab contractors?

The Acting Speaker: The floor is open for further debate.

Mr O'Toole: It is indeed my pleasure to rise to speak today in support of the government's budgetary policy as resuming the debate on the budgetary measures of this government. It's a policy that's been based on a strong, clear plan, a plan that has yielded more than one million net new jobs. By any measure, this is what governments attempt to do: to create the opportunity for investment and job creation for people and their future.

It's important to realize that the accountability of this government is that we've paid down more than \$5 billion of provincial debt. By any measure, rather than accumulating debt, we're now in the process of paying down the mortgage. All of the persons listening would know that is the mortgage that was accumulated more seriously in the 10 years from 1985 to 1995, which we often refer to as the "black hole," where in fact the debt had basically doubled.

At the same time, we're making our priorities in areas such as health care and education. Everyone here, and those listening, would know that we have spent more than ever in the history of any province on a per capita

basis, up to \$28 billion. When we were elected in 1995, those here would know it was \$17.4 billion. That's an additional \$10 billion, and more, for health care.

I should put to you that the question still remains: even with the Romanow report and the Kirby report, where is the federal government? Every Premier of every province is asking the same question, but our Premier and our Minister of Health, Tony Clement, have certainly stepped up to the challenge.

In the context of the other priority—it's hard to say which is first—education, as you know, we did have the fair funding model, and that model has resulted in a more equal distribution of funding for public education. By any measure, having served as a trustee for two terms, I can tell you that it was anything but equitable. Persons in assessment-poor communities received less money on a per capita basis than those in assessment-rich communities. This government had the courage to address that problem. In fact, more recently we appointed Dr Rozanski, who looked at the equity in the funding model, who said that the student-focused funding model was the right thing to do. He recommended some improvements and enhancements, and our Premier, Ernie Eves, has committed that money to go forward and to be spread with the same formula, referred to as the student-focused funding model.

There are boards, of course, that are going to be arguably spending a little bit less. There were transition funds to deal with those large, more wealthy boards, and those transition funds, whether or not they were spent correctly, are certainly part of the ongoing debate. But they remain our top priorities.

If someone were to ask me, the most important thing in all of this is keeping the economy strong, because fundamentally without a strong economy you can't have the resources to invest in your priorities; that's health care, education and, arguably, the environment as well, because the environment, in the broader sense, is related to our quality of life and certainly to our health care system.

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We continue to see positive results in our plan. Just last week our government announced that Ontario job creation had accounted for all of the jobs created in Canada in the first five months of 2003.

Ontario suffered the most during the recession when, Mr Speaker, respectfully, you were in government. I acknowledge that there was a recession. I was a regional councillor at the time. We all know that the controls at the provincial level in the overall aggregate of the functioning of the economy—provinces' functions don't have a terrible amount to do with that. In a direct sense, we can influence the tax policies. The federal government and the monetary controls that they have, interest rates and taxation powers, certainly have something to do, but it's also a global economy.

Well, here we have it, from having the worst performance in a 10-year period to having the best performance, and we heard our Premier say today it was the best

performance in over a decade of any country in the G7 and the European common market. It's clear that 44,000 full- and part-time jobs have been created. Employment in the health care industry rose by 11,000 jobs in May, largely offsetting the April job losses, while the accommodation and food services sector gained 7,000 jobs in May, partially offsetting the 12,000 jobs lost in April. A surge of 24,000 more Ontarians in the labour force confirms that Ontario's workers remain confident in their job prospects.

Balancing a budget is a difficult task for any government, but it's one we take very seriously. In fact, I would put to you that that is the brand of this government: the commitment of careful, difficult but necessary decision-making and responding to some very fundamental criteria, one of which is a balanced budget. I know the member from, I believe, Scarborough-Agincourt always has things to say on that. In fact he had an opportunity to say that in estimates. But I know that if, God forbid, they were ever given a chance to govern and, God forbid, he were to be Minister of Finance, he would know that history is clear, a Liberal government given power for a short period of time, and their brand, their moniker was very clear: raise taxes. In fact, there was an article in the paper last week which was written by a not-so-friendly editorialist about the Liberal plan. Mr Phillips in his time may take time to answer their plan. Their election platform is short about \$5 billion, let alone not addressing the what-ifs that he's created in how they're going to balance the budget.

I think that if the people of Ontario establish this element of trust and branding with a certain government style, it's clear that Ontario as a province, not to be greedy or self-centred, is a rich province, a very fortunate province in the heartland of Canada. It represents about a third of the population of Canada, but it also represents about 50% of the economy. In fact, I think we should be benevolent as a province, not in an arrogant tone. We send more money to Ottawa than we receive back, and that's referred to, as some would know, as the transfer payment inequity.

To his credit, Premier Rae mentioned that. During his staggering years in the late 1993 era, just prior to the social contract, he was saying that the federal government wasn't stepping up to it. Now we're hearing it from other provinces that are suffering with this mad cow disease out west. We're hearing other Premiers joining the call for the federal government to be there for all Canadians. In many cases, what really galls me technically is, we get Sheila Copps or somebody else giving out flags that are really being paid for by the taxpayers of Ontario and the small businesses of Ontario. When they're signing that cheque for whatever it is out in some other province, the taxpayers of Ontario quite often are the funders of that announcement.

I'd like to talk a little bit today about what we're doing to promote investor confidence in this province. As I said before, pretty much the theme of anything I'm talking about is, you have to have the right economic funda-

mentals: developing the confidence and the stable horizon line for investors to grow the economy, to add value to the activities, to add research and technology and high-value knowledge-based economy. You certainly need that kind of forward working with our universities and our colleges. I'd have to say that all of the naysayers were suggesting that the double cohort, the reforms in education about eliminating the grade 13 year that has been talked about for 10 years—this government had the courage to go forward with that.

We also had the courage to make the greatest investments in the history of Ontario in post-secondary education at the college and university levels. I can only say as a parent of five children, and of course my spouse is a teacher—Friday morning, I along with the Honourable Jim Flaherty, Janet Ecker and Jerry Ouellette—we're the members for Durham—was at Durham College and at the site of the University of Ontario Institute of Technology, the first new university in Canada in many, many years. I think it has been about 40 years since the creation of the last university in Ontario. It's this government that did this. Going back—

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton Centre): Bill Davis.

Mr O'Toole: Bill Davis started the college system some years ago. If you want to trace the history and success of this province, you need look no further than to the history of the Conservative government of this province. That's why I stand here today. There's no government that does things perfectly, but we create the climate for confidence and optimism to grow our future together and create the infrastructure, both human and physical, to create opportunities for young people.

I know that wealthy investors that we need to attract to this province are watching. While I'm proud to say that many wealthy investors have chosen to put or to keep their money in Ontario, they are not the only ones who have done so. Hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions, of individuals have also chosen our province as a smart place to invest. Every person who invests in a mutual fund that supports an Ontario company or uses an RRSP to buy a home in Ontario is making a conscious choice—as I have said before, life is about choices, and this government is prepared to make the difficult choices—a decision, if you will, that our province offers them an opportunity for growth and stability.

During our government's pre-budget consultations, people told us they wanted us to focus on several key things. One, of course, was health care; another, as I've mentioned, was education; safe and strong communities; and ensuring accountability for the tax dollars we spend on their behalf. This whole theme of accountability is becoming a driving and important theme; I think that earlier today or last week, Mr Speaker, in your remarks in the House you talked about accountability in private members' business. They told us of their concerns about investor and consumer confidence, rising insurance rates and the need for more tax cuts. Perhaps this is where the Liberals and our government differ most profoundly: in their attitude or policy toward the implications of tax cuts.

I believe, more properly and more accurately framed, it's tax policy used to stimulate or get the best results from investment or job creation opportunities. It's those policies that, when we were elected, were quite new and, I would say, not widely accepted that have proven after eight years that we have both cut taxes and increased revenue. That's what is taught in monetary policy; it's a multiplier effect. If you give someone \$100, they're probably going to spend \$1,000. If you give someone a \$100-a-month raise, and that could be in the form of a tax cut, they'll take that \$100-a-month raise and potentially buy a car or have an addition on their house. So there's a multiplier effect in putting money into the hands of taxpayers, and that multiplier effect really translates into jobs. Investors have told us they need this confidence and the tax policies I've mentioned.

People told us they are concerned about the integrity of our capital markets and the safety of their retirement savings. This is a pressing current issue when one wants to talk about pension plans and their lack of performance over the last while. There's nothing that government has done there except that those funds that were invested in technology or in the wrong sectors of the market are underperforming; there's no question about it. I think it's prudent to say there is a review of the resiliency of the pension funds, and in the few minutes left I may get a chance to say something on that.

I'm proud to say that our government listens to those concerns and responds with a budget that reflects the priorities we've heard from people and business right across Ontario.

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Our government remains committed to implementing all major investment confidence initiatives that were included in the budget measures act of 2002. These include broader rights for secondary market investors to sue. This would provide a stronger deterrent to poor disclosure practices. We're also proposing that there be no liability for investors in publicly traded income trusts for activities of the trusts or trustees. This would extend the same protections to unit-holders as are enjoyed by shareholders in business corporations and limited partners in limited partnerships.

Our government is committed to a balanced approach that protects our investors and consumers and ensures that our capital markets function efficiently. Effective capital markets are important to businesses in Ontario. They provide our businesses with capital on competitive terms so they can grow and create more jobs. We have implemented key recommendations of the minister's five-year review committee final report, *Reviewing the Securities Act (Ontario)*, which was released on May 29, 2003.

On April 7, 2003, we proclaimed the amendments to the Securities Act and the Commodity Futures Act contained in the *Keeping the Promise for a Strong Economy Act (Budget Measures)*, 2002, that were passed last December. These measures make Ontario's system the toughest in Canada and include: (1) new powers for

the Ontario Securities Commission to impose fines for securities violations and order that offenders give up their ill-gotten gains from those violations; (2) increased maximum court fines and prison terms for securities offences. Maximum court fines have increased from \$1 million to \$5 million and prison terms from two years to five years less a day; (3) increased fines for insider trading; (4) new powers for the Ontario Securities Commission to review the information that public companies provide to investors; (5) new rules and powers for the OSC that strengthen its ability to hold CEOs and CFOs accountable for the accuracy of their companies' financial statements; and (6) new powers for the OSC to make rules on the functions and responsibilities of audit companies of boards of directors of public companies.

We believe that when people invest they deserve to know that the government has set and enforced high standards so that they can make informed choices and invest with confidence. Most of these measures are supported by the five-year review committee's final report, *Reviewing the Securities Act (Ontario)*. This report has been tabled in the Legislature and I encourage all members to review it.

Given the importance of protecting investors and maintaining efficient markets, the government will form a select committee of the Legislative Assembly to review the report, consult with the public and the financial community, and report back to the government this fall. I would encourage Mr Kwinter and others who watch the market with great insight to be involved.

We have introduced new laws to strengthen our capital markets and increase consumer and investor protection so that Ontario remains competitive in the global marketplace. We have also consulted with consumers, auto industry experts and stakeholders to address the issue of rising insurance costs and put in place a strategy that will stabilize costs and improve delivery of benefits to accident victims. Rob Sampson has consulted broadly and is widely recognized as having many of the right answers to this very complex issue. We listened to the stakeholders' concerns and as a result have moved to identify and address gaps in the system for severely injured individuals, and to correct them.

We have also removed incentives for unscrupulous individuals to defraud the system by taking measures to reduce insurance fraud. We have reduced waste and duplication in the system to ensure that treatment dollars go for treatment and not for anything else. We are working with experts on improvements and we are looking for further ways to fight fraud and abuse in the system. We have consulted with consumers and listened and identified ways to improve the system. We've done this to ensure that Ontario has a competitive marketplace.

As you know, it is election today in New Brunswick, and the number one issue is auto insurance. Also coming up in the next few weeks will be the announcement of the provincial election in Nova Scotia, and it will be the number one issue. This is not unique to the Ontario marketplace; this is an issue for all Canadians.

The causes clearly are the failure in the investment climate, where the returns on premium dollars are going down, and the cost of property damage—air bags and other high-tech vehicles—is going up, and the cost of health care services, specifically soft tissue through the DACs, is going up. So there are some driving costs and some shortfalls in revenue across the country as well as the response to the reinsurance marketplace since September 11.

This government prides itself on accountability. We pride ourselves in the financial market that I've talked about, in building confident relationships with not just the taxpayers but with the province and its entire constituency.

In the few minutes I have left, I just want to mention the Financial Services Commission of Ontario. FSCO is constantly monitoring the insurance system for long-term affordability and availability. We understand that this is a compulsory product. We understand that there are pressures, that consumers—those hard-working people in Ontario like my constituents—need to have some confidence that these rates are as low as possible and yet the protections are there for them and their families in the event of a tragedy.

As I said, there has been a tightening in the reinsurance market. As a result, insurers have difficulty obtaining reinsurance from the regular book of the business. This government itself looked at it in 1995 and came in with the Automobile Insurance Rate Stability Act. I'm confident that once again we will have the right responses to a very, very important issue, and not just the capital market and the insurance market, but it's the improved services that I do believe are in the co-ops, the credit unions and other financial players in the marketplace. This government is the right partner to work with going into the future.

The Acting Speaker: Members now have up to two minutes for questions, comments.

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): I'm pleased to stand up to speak about one of the consequences that the member from Durham happened to have forgotten in his presentation. It has to do with space in schools and the effect that the funding formula has had on accessibility to this public space, paid for by taxpayers' dollars.

In Barrie, the Barrie Royals is a house league basketball club with 1,200 kids who play basketball. What has happened is that the school space has gone from \$3,000 a year to \$50,000 a year. There is an inability for these organizations to utilize these already-paid-for public spaces to help the kids.

Deep River is a one-high-school town. Dr David Lee is a physicist who started this basketball program five years ago. Basketball is a low-cost entry sport. What has happened? Because of the policy of this government, the cost to utilize the space in the gym for basketball has gone from \$1,000 a year to \$10,000 a year. This team is going to end up folding because there is no other access for these kids; there is no other gym. In Collingwood, it's

gone up from \$25 to \$400 per child. The Hurricane Basketball Association in Scarborough is being limited because of the extra cost.

Those are the consequences of this government's policies. The consequences are that these spaces are less accessible. At a time when we should be dealing with physical fitness because of childhood diabetes, we have an issue here with their policies.

Ms Churley: I have to say that I listened but I didn't listen with interest, to be honest, to what the member for Durham had to say because I've heard it all before. They get up and they talk from remarks prepared, I guess, by staff in the Minister of Finance's office, but it's very selective. I suppose you could accuse us of doing the same thing: standing up for people who need a voice, people this government and the members don't talk about. They don't talk about the fact that the lower- and middle-income people of this province are falling further and further behind. In fact, the meagre tax break, if they received any at all under this government, is all used up and more as a result of higher user fees throughout the system: higher tuition costs; higher user fees; new user fees within our schools—just been talked about; more user fees across the board that parents are paying for their kids; long-term care, seniors paying more and more for rent and other needs they have.

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I find it interesting as well that the government members get up and talk about balancing the budget. Well, the budget wasn't balanced last year and it's not balanced this year either.

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): Wrong.

Ms Churley: No, no. Listen. You see, Mr Speaker, they don't want to listen, but this is a fact. The government pocketed \$967 million from the February 2003 federal-provincial health accord for 2002-03 while only increasing health spending by \$350 million. So without that cash infusion that they took—stole—from money that desperately needed to be put into health care, to try to balance their budget—then the government said they were planning to sell off \$2.2 billion in public assets. They haven't told us what it is yet, but that's what they've got to do to balance their budget.

Ms Mushinski: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would ask you to rule on the allegation, that the member for Riverdale accused this side of the House of stealing. I don't believe that's parliamentary and I would ask you to rule on that, please.

The Acting Speaker: I would ask the member to perhaps withdraw that one word.

Ms Churley: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'm the member for Toronto-Danforth.

I didn't accuse any members of stealing money. I said the government stole money from a health care fund to put into their general revenues to balance the budget. I don't believe that's out of order.

The Acting Speaker: I would prefer if you would withdraw it, but I understand your argument. I won't order you to do it; I will ask you.

Ms Churley: Well, in that case, because I have such respect for you, Mr Speaker, I will withdraw.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

Further questions, comments? The member for—usually I'm ready for you—Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale. My apologies.

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I'm happy to share in this debate. The member from Durham spoke so eloquently, as he always does. I think he's got a record for speaking in this House. When we announced the university in his region, the university of technology—because we are at the forefront of technology—I can quite understand why it was in Durham. Of course it's because of the work the member puts in. He is always putting his community at the forefront, to make sure that when the government decisions are being made, those decisions are perhaps—I'm not saying they're slanted his way, but certainly that consideration comes to mind as to where it is best to locate that. So I was quite pleased to join the member on this institute of technology, which I think the whole of Ontario will benefit from.

People talk about spaces in schools. One of the members spoke about some of these sports—utilization of school space has gone from \$2,000 to \$50,000. I'm sure it has nothing to do with inflation. That's game-playing. Be it unions, be it the boards, somebody's game-playing. Not all of a sudden does the price jump from \$2,000 to \$50,000, and similarly for basketball, from \$1,000 to \$10,000.

I'm not suggesting we should go in and start investigating, just like we had to investigate the Toronto school board when all of a sudden they said they had a \$150-million deficit. We sent Dr Rosen and the forensic accountant. He said, "None of that. The budget is balanced; in fact, there's more money in the classrooms." I think the opposition should stop this fearmongering.

Mr Bradley: The member for Durham obviously didn't have sufficient time to be able to say and lament the fact that the Minister of Public Safety and Security had \$181 million taken out of his budget this year after \$60 million was taken out last year. I know my good friend Bob Runciman has worked hard to secure that kind of funding. We have heard this government talk about how important security is in this province, but we see a loss of a full \$181 million. That's more than the budget of some ministries. I know the member for Durham would want to express his concern about that and his opposition to the Premier and the Minister of Finance taking it out of that budget. I also know he would want to support my bill on Thursday of this week—because I supported his bill; that's one reason—to end partisan government advertising by having the office of the auditor vet and approve any advertising by the government so there's no partisan tinge to it. I heard the Chair of Management Board admit a couple of weeks ago that the government has now rolled up over \$400 million in government advertising, and that's before the latest

barrage we're seeing in newspapers, on television, on the radio and in pamphlets coming to our houses.

Last, I wanted to ask the member about this, because he knows municipal politicians well: my friends who are sitting on municipal councils are beside themselves over this promise that you're not going to permit them to raise taxes without having a referendum. They are saying, "You want us to be partners in many of these projects." There are unfortunate activities that take place, like SARS, and they may need some additional funds. All of them, to a person—Tories, Liberals, New Democrats and others—are saying this is bizarre and crazy. I want the member to comment on that.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Durham has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr O'Toole: I'll just respond to each presenter—and I appreciate them. The member from Sarnia-Lambton talked about education costs and access to gymnasiums, and I think the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale covered what happened fairly well. You have to ask yourself, if the building is there and no one's using it, what's the problem here? People have a right to that building, in my view. So I think there's more to be said about that.

I was quite impressed that the member from Toronto-Danforth was actually talking in economic terms. It's quite surprising to see the NDP worried about a balanced budget. They have no clue what that means. But I do respect her views.

Mr Spina: That's an oxymoron.

Mr O'Toole: The member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale, always accurate, in his comments on my involvement—

Ms Churley: Who are you calling a moron?

Mr O'Toole: I didn't use that term. I would say that the University of Ontario Institute of Technology—all the members in that area have worked very hard, along with Bob Strickert, the chair of the board and Gary Polonsky, the president.

I'll save almost a minute for the member from St Catharines, a member I have a lot of respect for. He talked about public security and Mr Runciman's budget that's being asked to be reviewed and tightened up. I think he should call his cousins in Ottawa and ask about the \$1-billion gun registry. There's some serious waste there. Maybe they could transfer some of it to Mr Runciman to increase security on our streets. We hear it all the time.

I suppose the last couple of seconds will be the most controversial. I think the municipal referendum issue is very, very important. Speaker, I know that some day, God willing, you'll be the mayor of Hamilton—the people will decide. But that's exactly what I'm hearing. I chaired about three municipal budgets, thanks to Marie Morano, the treasurer, who taught me a great deal about tax rates, mill rates, assessment and things like that. We know that most of their budget is wages and benefits. It is a tough issue. I'm willing to listen.

The Acting Speaker: It is now time for further debate. The floor is open.

Mr Phillips: I'm pleased to join the debate on the budget. I'll start by putting a few facts before Ontarians. The first is that when the Eves government took over in 1995, the debt of the province of Ontario, according to the government's latest budget papers, was \$90.7 billion. Today it's \$111.7 billion. It's up \$21 billion. The government can't hide from that; those are the numbers they've published. And they've added 23% to the debt of the province of Ontario. I might add that in the same period of time, the federal government took the debt down by \$10 billion.

The reason I raise this is that for several years the government borrowed billions of dollars to fund tax cuts. We added \$21 billion to the debt of the province of Ontario. We're now spending, I think, \$400 million a year more in interest costs than in 1995. So when the government and Premier Eves say, "We know how to manage the finances of the province," I say firstly to the public, they've added \$21 billion to the debt of the province of Ontario, borrowed \$10 billion to fund tax cuts—the only province in the country that decided they could borrow money for tax cuts. Every other province, led by Alberta, I might add, said, "Listen, we're going to balance our books before we start cutting taxes," but not Premier Eves.

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The second point: I'd like to talk about broken promises. All of us, at least here in the Legislature, remember something called the Blueprint. In 1999, the government—Premier Eves—got elected on the basis of saying, "Listen, elect me and I'm going to cut your property tax by 20%." They were very specific. I remember the debates in my riding where they said to people, "We're going to cut your property tax by 20%. Not only that, we'll make it mandatory for owners of rental units to pass on the savings. This tax cut will put \$500 million back in the hands of individuals and families."

Mr Bradley: What happened to that promise?

Mr Phillips: My colleague said, "What happened to that promise?" They abandoned it. They simply said, "We're not going ahead with that. Sorry, we've changed our mind. I know we got elected on the basis of that. I know we promised we would cut your property tax, but we're not going to go ahead with that. We've decided that we're going to do something different."

It was just a year ago that the government abandoned \$1.5 billion of tax cuts. Before they abandoned them, someone said to me, "Do you think they'll go ahead with their tax cuts?" I said, "Absolutely, they'll go ahead with them, because they have something called the Taxpayer Protection Act, which means that they would be breaking the law if they didn't go ahead with those tax cuts that they had legislated." It wasn't just a promise; it was in legislation. It was passed by the Legislature.

As a matter of fact, a few of you may remember, I was asked on a television show, "If they break this promise, what will you do?" I said, "I'll eat my hat." Strangely enough, here in the Legislature, the then government House leader, Mr Stockwell, brought me in a hat. It was a

cake, but it was in the form of a hat, and I had to eat my hat. Why? Because I actually believed that they believed in their Taxpayer Protection Act. I thought that was one thing that they would be sure they wouldn't break. But they just say, "Nah, we can't afford it." By the way, they couldn't afford it, so they just broke the Taxpayer Protection Act. That's why my colleague from St Catharines was raising the point with the municipalities. They're telling municipalities, "Listen, if you want to raise taxes, you've got to have a referendum." But when it came to the Eves government, when they decided they were going to break the Taxpayer Protection Act, they didn't go with a referendum, they simply came here in the Legislature and said, "We're going to change the Taxpayer Protection Act."

I say to those who fought for that Taxpayer Protection Act, and the government got elected on that basis, it isn't worth the paper it's written on. At the first opportunity to break it, the government did. The public shouldn't take my word for this; this is a document that Mr Eves puts out, *On the Right Track*. What does it say here? Well, it says, "Questions and answers." First question: "How can the government justify breaking the Taxpayer Protection Act" by delaying tax cuts? That's the government's own document.

Then they said, "Well, as Moody's said, to meet the target of a fourth balanced budget, the government delayed scheduled reductions in tax rates."

I say to the public, solemn promises made by these people, "Elect us and we'll do all these tax cuts," should be taken with the same seriousness that they took them, which is not serious at all. "We simply break the Taxpayer Protection Act. If we can't afford them, we'll simply decide we're not going ahead with those tax cuts."

I say to the public—and I'll talk about the fiscal situation right now—recognize these promises for what they are. They are pre-election promises that they have, in my opinion, no opportunity to carry out.

The province used to have an AAA credit rating. In 1990, we had the top credit rating: AAA. The member for Durham talks about those days in a negative way, but in 1990 the province had a AAA credit rating, the best you could have. It was downgraded three times during the NDP. The government has now been in office for eight years. What's happened to our credit rating? It's had one upgrade. We are still two levels below where we were in 1990. We've had one upgrade.

What do the credit rating agencies say about the state of finances in the province of Ontario? The reason these people are important is that they make money by rating the creditworthiness of companies and governments. It's the basis on which interest rates are set for people who loan money to companies or to governments. As a matter of fact, a credit rating upgrade can save as much as a quarter of 1% on the interest charges.

What did the two credit rating agencies that have commented on the budget say, the budget we're debating here today where the government says, "Listen, we're

running a surplus"? DBRS, Dominion Bond Rating Service, was the first one out, and they say, "Ontario faces a DBRS adjusted deficit of \$1.9 billion in 2003-04, compared to a deficit last year of \$572 million." So one credit rating agency is saying, "Listen, the way we look at the books, the province of Ontario had a deficit last year \$572 million, and this year is going to have deficit of \$1.9 billion."

Why is that? These organizations say the government is balancing its books by doing several things. One is selling off essential assets of the province of Ontario. And when we look at the books, we don't count that as part of the operating income. It would essentially be like your family selling the home to pay for the groceries. That's what the government is doing, and DBRS says any sensible accounting will tell the people of Ontario we are running a deficit this year of \$1.9 billion.

The other rating agency that has commented is Standard and Poor's. There are three major rating agencies; Moody's has yet to comment. Standard and Poor's put their comment out on May 15. They say, "The province appears to be on track to post a deficit of roughly 1.7% of revenues in the current fiscal year, and they had a small deficit last year." So 1.7% of revenues is about \$1.2 billion. So we've got the two credit rating agencies that have looked at the province's finances. If you want to use real accounting, and if you want to have an accurate assessment of the state of finances of the province of Ontario, both the rating agencies are saying that we are running a deficit. And both, by the way, are indicating that next year is more serious than this year—both of them.

I say to the public, here we are after eight years and the credit rating of the province of Ontario is still two levels below where it was in 1990, costing us tens of millions of dollars of increased interest costs. The two independent organizations that have commented on the finances of the province of Ontario say we're running a deficit of probably close to \$2 billion.

The next point I'd like to make is that I think in some respects the situation may be worse than either of these two rating agencies has indicated. Last week, the Minister of Finance was at what we call estimates to explain the finances of the province and acknowledged these things about the finances for this year. Firstly, she and Premier Eves are planning to sell \$2.2 billion of assets. She could not name what those are—and here we are, well into the fiscal year. Some \$2.2 billion worth of assets—that's huge; unheard of.

The only time the province has ever seen anything like that was when the 407 was sold. Highway 407 was sold May 5, 1999. When was the last election called? May 5, 1999. The 407 delivered a cheque down here for a profit of \$1.6 billion. And why was there a profit? Because they sold the highway for 99 years and they put no controls on the tolls. The poor 407 users are going to be ripped off for 99 years. That's why we are so suspicious of this \$2.2-billion asset sale, because the last time we saw a number like this, the people of Ontario were really, really ripped off.

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There is \$850 million in increased spending on SARS that was not accounted for when the rating agencies looked at our finances. This is new money, \$850 million. There is \$800 million in savings in the budget. There is this line: "We're going to find \$800 million in savings." Normally, that number is \$200 million or \$300 million. But there's \$800 million, and I say to the people of Ontario, the government won't identify any of that \$800 million—and if, after eight years of being in government, there's \$800 million in savings simply lying around, what have they been doing for the last eight years? It's a phony number, frankly, \$800 million in savings in the budget.

Finally, there's \$800 million in federal money in the budget that is available only if the federal government runs a surplus of \$6 billion. The way it works is, the federal government has said, "If we run a surplus of \$6 billion, we will take \$2 billion and allocate it to the provinces for health care. But we've got to run a \$6-billion surplus. Frankly, I think that's somewhat problematic. The economy is without question slower than anyone had anticipated. Yet the government has put \$770 million in federal money in here that's available only with that \$6-billion surplus.

The reason I raise these things is that the government is once again thinking they are going to get themselves elected by promising unaffordable tax cuts that will only be found to be unaffordable after the election. The proof of it is this: first, they still haven't delivered either of two major promises made in 1999—in fact, they've cancelled one completely; second, they had to abandon the Taxpayer Protection Act just a few months ago. The reason they did that, by their own admission, was to balance the books because they couldn't afford the tax cut.

The minister confirmed at estimates, "Yes, indeed, those numbers are correct. We have \$2.2 billion of asset sales, unidentified; we have \$850 million of new spending on SARS that was not identified anywhere in the budget; yes, we have to find \$800 million worth of savings, none of it identified; and yes, we've got \$770 million of federal money as revenue that will only be available if the federal government runs a surplus of \$6 billion."

So I say to the public, you're going to be faced with a promise soon: "We're going to be able to maintain our health care spending and our education spending, we're going to be able to sell \$2.2 billion worth of assets, we're going to find \$850 million for SARS money that's not in the budget, we're going to find \$800 million of savings, none of which has been identified, and we're going to book \$770 million of federal money that's available only with a \$6-billion surplus—and we're going to give you these tax cuts."

For the life of me, I don't understand why the province of Ontario needs to have corporate taxes 25% below the US. That's one of the key promises of this government: "We want our corporate taxes to be 25% lower than our competitors in the US." I say we in this province have to fund our health care system in a way

that's different from our competitors. As a matter of fact, the government says that if you're a manufacturer in Ontario, it costs you \$2,500 less for health coverage in Ontario than it does in Michigan. Why is that? There's no magic to it. It's because we have chosen in the province and in this country, all of us together to share in the cost of health. How does that happen? It's because we've chosen, through our taxes, to pay for our health care system. Yet our corporations are going to find corporate taxes 25% below the US—at enormous cost to all of us. I have no difficulty with our taxes—we've got to be competitive to sustain our economy. But 25% below the US? Just Ontario's portion of that is \$2.2 billion.

Another big promise they think they're going to get elected on is they're going to give \$500 million to private schools. Again, for the life of me, I don't understand, when our public schools are starved for resources—and believe me, they are starved for resources. I thought former Premier Davis made a very statesmanlike speech the other day in defence of public education. But here we are in this budget proceeding with \$500 million for private schools.

There is a brand new proposal in here to send cheques out to seniors for the education portion of their taxes. I just say, what it's going to mean is a \$20,000 or \$30,000 cheque going out to someone like Ted Rogers or Frank Stronach. It's done deliberately to try and buy an election.

The member for Durham talks about the success they've had with tax cuts. I say to the people of Ontario, recognize this: \$21 billion added to the debt of the province because we borrowed \$10 billion for tax cuts in those early years. They still haven't delivered on the tax cut promises they made in 1999 during that election, and they had to break the Taxpayer Protection Act just a few months ago because Ontario couldn't afford it. The people of Ontario are wise when it comes to understanding promises that can't be kept, and they'll hold this government accountable.

The member for Durham talked about laying out for the people of Ontario the province's financial plans. Well, I'll just say that this is a document our party put out. We laid out for the next four years our fiscal plan, revenues and expenses. We engaged a forensic auditor to look at all of our spending, and that particular individual worked I think 80 hours, looking at our spending estimates. We got two of the best economists in Ontario to look at our total plan. They've all said, "Listen, the numbers are accurate. They can do it. Their numbers add up."

I will say to Premier Eves, we have yet to see anything from him except for the next 10 months. We have not seen the next two years, three years or four years. I challenge them to come forward. It was just the other day when I said to the Minister of Finance, "Listen, all we've got from you for next year is one number. Will you please give us some evidence of your revenue forecast?" Nothing. Nothing at all.

I'm pleased in this relatively short period of time to comment on the government's budget plans, to say that

perhaps one of the best indicators is the two independent credit agencies, both of which have said, "You've got problems. You're running a deficit already this year." As a matter of fact, one indicates that maybe they can solve their problems by delaying them: "The province ought to delay further tax cuts beyond January 1, 2004," warning us that they can't deliver their plans. So I say to the people of Ontario, be wary. I've seen them break their promises before.

The Acting Speaker: Members now have up to two minutes for questions or comments.

Ms Churley: This will be my only opportunity to speak today, in these two minutes, because of the changes to the rules. We have fewer and fewer opportunities to speak in this Legislature to these very important bills.

I do want to say that I'm glad the member for Scarborough-Agincourt has raised the Taxpayer Protection Act once again, because the government is trying to have it both ways. On one hand, when we complain about all the people who have been left out of their budget who badly need assistance and help, this government gets up and says they give tax cuts to people and that will help them, as though that's going to help the disabled who badly need an increase and all the low-income workers that we gave minimum wage increases to, I think pretty well every year when we were in government.

1700

May I say that anybody can govern in good times. I shudder to think what would have happened to the most vulnerable people in this province had this gang been in government during the worst recession we've had here since the 1930s. As you well know, Mr Speaker—you were there—it was agony to try to determine how to best support those most vulnerable people in our society in a very bad recession. The irony is that had we been re-elected in good economic times, which this government benefited from, we would have paid down the deficit faster than they did. They tend to ignore that.

But the interesting thing about the Taxpayer Protection Act is that they can't keep up with it—they are breaking their own law—but now they're going to impose that on our municipalities. Can you believe that? At the same time that they're telling the city of Toronto, for instance, that they can hire more police but they'd have to hold referendums and adhere to the Taxpayer Protection Act, at the same time our public health system is not getting enough money, they're going to impose that same act on them. Shame.

Mr O'Toole: I did take time to leave the chamber and watch the debate of the member for Scarborough-Agincourt on the television so I could get a clear picture of what was being said. As I suspected—and that's why I had to pay close attention—it was fraught with severe weaknesses in terms of explaining. I only have a certain amount of time to explain one of the fundamental errors where his premise—if I can prove one of them is wrong, you could conclude by that that they're all wrong.

He should know that in 1995, when we were elected, there was an \$11-billion-plus deficit. That's 20% of spending. Any government that had to stop the deficit in one year would have created a very serious problem for the people of Ontario. We chose to take three years, so we did accumulate additional debt.

I challenge him to look at his election document, which I have a copy of. They were never going to balance the budget, and I put to you that they never will balance the budget. I think he should stick to the fundamentals and explain his platform, which is seriously flawed by about \$5 billion. It's his turn to explain. He's had the time.

As opposition, they don't have any responsibility directly in terms of governing the province except to criticize, and he's done a fair amount of that. But I ask him to ask his cousins as well where the federal government is on all of the issues facing the people of Ontario. The people of Ontario are concerned, as they should be. I can assure you that Minister Clement, the Minister of Health, has the issues well in hand, but SARS didn't come in in a car or a boat across Lake Ontario. It came in through an airport. Those are regulated by the federal government. Mad cow disease is completely regulated federally. Where are they on that? West Nile didn't come into Ontario without first being in other places. That is again the federal government. They're not up to the job. They never were, they still aren't, and I think this budget clearly demonstrates they don't even understand.

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): I'd like to thank the member for Scarborough-Agincourt for his usual careful analysis of the finances of the province of Ontario. There's no member in this House who's more credible to talk about the finances of Ontario than the member for Scarborough-Agincourt. He provides insight, an objective point of view, gives you careful analysis and gives you the straight goods, the truth. Let me underline "the truth."

It is with amazement, I guess, that the people of Ontario find out that the Harris-Eves government, who consider themselves to be such good financial managers, added \$21 billion to the debt of this province. That's a 23% increase in the debt of this province, \$21 billion. I'm sure the people of Ontario are amazed that the Harris-Eves government, the same ones who consider themselves to be such good financial managers, borrowed \$10 billion to give tax cuts to the richest in this province.

I'm sure it's no surprise to the people of Ontario that the Harris-Eves government has broken many of its promises. Let me talk about two in particular that have a severe impact on northern Ontario.

On November 21, Ernie Eves promised the people of Sudbury and northeastern Ontario that he would allocate \$100 million for the paving of Highway 69 from Sudbury to Parry Sound, the first portion. Well, I'm looking through the budget and I don't see that \$100 million allocated for the paving of Highway 69 from Sudbury to Parry Sound.

Of course, the Northern Ontario Medical School, that school that was supposed to open in 2004—another broken promise—is not going to be opening now until 2005.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Now the member from Scarborough-Agincourt has up to two minutes to respond.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: Hang on. One, two, three—I stand corrected. My apologies. There is one more response available. The member for Niagara Centre now has the floor.

Mr Kormos: I've been eager to respond to the comments by Mr Phillips, but while waiting for my opportunity to do this, I've had to listen to Conservative backbenchers. Exactly whom is their budget serving? Whose interests are being accommodated?

Certainly not those of college and university students, whose tuition has increased by over 150% since 1995. This Tory budget not only tolerates but encourages tuition fees of \$20,000, \$21,000, \$22,000, tuition fees alone of \$20,000-plus. This government has no commitment to reducing those fees, but promises more deregulation of university and college tuitions. This government has kept the minimum wage suppressed at \$6.85 an hour for the last eight years. That makes it out to around 5 bucks an hour now. There is little relief for college and university students who can find those minimum wage jobs.

You see, the problem is that when I was kid going to college and university, like you, Speaker, students took those minimum wage jobs. Now it's their parents doing those minimum wage jobs because this government, over the course of eight years, has seen the deindustrialization of Ontario become a reality, whether it's in the north with mills and mines, whether it's down where we come from in Hamilton-Niagara, industries such as Fleet manufacturing down in Fort Erie, paper mills shutting down in Niagara as well as the north, steel mills losing production and losing jobs—Atlas Steel, Welland, and Slater Steel filing for bankruptcy protection as a result of, among other things, the incredible increase in electricity costs to industrial electricity users.

We are no longer competitive. The Tories have taken us down deep into that descent of joblessness and despair.

The Acting Speaker: I thank the member again for his assistance in getting me to count to four without screwing it up.

Now the member for Scarborough-Agincourt has up to two minutes.

Mr Phillips: I'm pleased to respond to the responses.

To the member from Durham, again, I'd just use the comments from the rating agencies. Here's what Standard and Poor's says: "Although part of the deterioration in the province's budgetary balance can be explained by cyclical factors, Standard and Poor's views the government's recent use of planned asset sales as being inconsistent with its stated objectives to take the necessary

steps to balance the budget.” Standard and Poor’s is saying, “Listen, in our opinion, there’s a deficit here in the province of probably about \$1.2 billion.”

DBRS, the Dominion Bond Rating Service, says the deficit is \$1.9 billion. As I said earlier in my remarks, they go on to say,

“Despite government optimism, balancing next year’s budget will likely pose challenges.

“Revenue growth is likely to slow markedly as a result of the tax cuts planned for January 2004....”

I say to the member for Durham, we in the Liberal Party have put out our numbers. We’ve said, “Here’s our four-year plan.” We’ve subjected them to two very senior economists. The chief economist at Scotiabank said, “After examining the program details, I believe that it is a workable plan for our province.”

The government has put out nothing. All we have is this year’s plan and one number for next year. They refuse to let the people of Ontario see how they’re going to fund all their promises. In my opinion, and in the opinion of many, it’s just like this year’s budget. Frankly, it doesn’t hold together.

Finally, I’d say to the member for Durham that I’m a little bit worried about the job situation. The unemployment rate in the province of Ontario in the year 2000 was 5.7%; in 2001, 6.3%; in 2002, 7.1%. Job creation in the first five months of this year has been extremely weak. I’m sorry to say that I think we’ve got some challenges ahead.

1710

The Acting Speaker: The floor is open for further debate. I recognize the member for Brampton Centre.

Mr Spina: Thank you, Speaker. I hope you enjoy your few remaining days in the chair and in the House. You made a statement earlier today that we applauded. You’ve been a major contributor to this Legislative Assembly in your posts and various positions that you indicated. We wish you well in the future.

I was here a short while, from 1995-99, when we as the caucus rump from the PCs, as we were known, were sitting in the corner next to the NDP. I always remember when you would get up and do your very loud, very eloquent and very hard-hitting criticism of the government. I think one of your favourite expressions was, “anti-union, anti-worker government.” I remember counting them one day and after you sat down I suggested that you were slipping. You couldn’t understand what my question was and I clarified it for you. I said, “You only accused us of being anti-worker, anti-union four times; usually it’s about six or seven.” This may be the only opportunity that I will publicly have to say to you, Speaker, that we wish you well and thank you for your contribution to government in this province.

Back to the issue: today we’re talking about the budget. The focus often tends to be more on the process than the content. I know the member from Welland kept referring to this as a contemptuous budget, full of contempt. I say that it’s nonsense, because it’s traditional—I like to use a little bit of a pun and call it “vintage whine.”

I call it “vintage whine” because whenever the opposition doesn’t have the opportunity to come right up front and get equal time to criticize whatever the government is doing—which is their job—we hear vintage whine. I think we’ve heard no more vintage whine than this, than over the process of how and where the budget was delivered, when in fact the only people that complained were the opposition and the press.

My God, the press was just unbelievable in their whine. Why? Because they didn’t have their cushy, free offices in the Legislature to do their reports from; they didn’t have their free parking spaces outside of this Legislative Assembly to be able to come here and set up all of their nice equipment and draw on the paid-for-by-the-Legislative-Assembly broadcast services, to be able to cover it all for nothing for them and provide them with the feed. What a vintage whine.

Mr Bartolucci: What does “CBC” stand for?

Mr Spina: I don’t know what your problem is, but I bet it’s hard to pronounce.

So you had this vintage whine from the media because they had to go out, set up and do things.

The member for Welland was mentioning how, “I’m sure Mr Stronach somehow got hundreds of thousands of dollars out of this.”

Mr Kormos: Three point five million dollars, Joe.

Mr Spina: Three point five. I don’t know where he gets that number. I really would be interested to see the source of that number, because Mr Stronach, I found, was amazing—

Mr Kormos: I heard it on the CBC.

Mr Spina: Well, yeah; that figures.

Mr Stronach was actually a Liberal candidate. They never stopped to think that one of the elements of the budget had to do with apprenticeship programs, and what better place to deliver a budget than in an environment that really espoused the epitome of private sector apprenticeship programs for what is the largest industry in our province, and that is the automotive industry?

There are a number of things that people wanted us to address in this budget, and I place the emphasis on the content of the budget. That is what people in my riding say to me. They are interested in what is in a budget and how it affects them, not where it’s presented. Frankly, that was only the speech, because we know that the actual budget papers themselves were filed with the Clerk’s office. The reality is that people don’t care where it’s delivered; they care about how it affects them. “How much money is it going to cost me out of my pocket?” or “Am I going to get it back?” That’s what people are interested in. “Is the government going to be able to provide for health care or education or transportation services?” That’s what the public is interested in; not the fact that it was presented as a symbolic gesture in a parts plant that trains apprentices, probably better than most other places anywhere in this province, for one of our most important industries, the automotive industry.

There are things that people in Ontario told us they wanted to see in this year’s budget. They wanted to see

tax cuts to promote growth and job creation, they wanted to see accountability for the dollars that are spent and they wanted to see continued investment in priority areas like health care and education.

On March 27, Minister Ecker introduced the budget that delivered on each and every one of these priorities. She said at the time, speaking directly to the people of Ontario:

"You told me that health care and education are your most important priorities; that your children and grandchildren need high standards and resources in school to succeed; that you require quality health care, when and where you need it, to stay well and get well.

"You told me that continued tax relief is important not just because it rewards individual initiative by leaving more money in your pocket to spend, save or invest, but because you recognize that lower taxes attract and keep jobs here.

"You spoke about how our young people need more opportunities for post-secondary education, for skills training and apprenticeships"—there it is, folks—"and about your concerns for your parents' and grandparents' ability to live independently in their own homes.

"You made it clear that strong communities require roads, transit, and safe and clean water.

"You told me that you wish governments were more accountable for the way they spend your tax dollars because you are often skeptical about whether the results are meeting the priorities.

"While it is never possible to meet every need, this budget reflects your priorities."

Today, let me focus on some of the commitments to health care. We know that everywhere we go today we hear people talking about health care. From the water cooler to the call-in show, it is often the number one topic on people's minds, and with good reason. We all need health care at various points in our lives and, as Minister Ecker so effectively pointed out, when and where we need it.

I will say—and I think I may have mentioned this in the past—I don't know if there is anyone who appreciates more than me the fact that we have a government-funded health care system. I am an individual who, at the age of 11, had to experience surgery near the heart at Toronto General, when we were living in Sault Ste Marie. We didn't have OHIP in 1957 and it cost my father a year's salary. By today's standards, that's not a whole lot, but if we look at the fact that it was a year's salary to pay for that surgery for his 11-year-old son, it had a significant impact on the finances and economics of the family, especially when there were still two other children.

In 1972, I had open-heart surgery. I will say that I was very pleased and relieved, of course, that it was completely covered by OHIP, at Toronto General once again. I appreciated the fact that I received the health care I needed, when I needed it and when the doctors recommended it. They made sure that I had the surgery that allowed me to live beyond the age of 26, which is what the age was at that point. I am now, 30 years later, very

proud of the fact that I'm able to be here. The Lord kept me on this earth for a reason. The congenital cardiac clinic at Toronto General Hospital still continues to function on a very strong, relevant basis, and I give credit to Dr Gary Webb and all of the staff at the unit, where I was in fact a week and a half ago for a complete check-up. I went through the SARS screening process to get in and out of the hospital. I want to say that the system worked, and it worked well. I want to give credit to our doctors, nurses and the other staff technicians and support people at all of the hospitals in Ontario, but particularly in Toronto, where they are on the front line of the SARS issue.

1720

We have to think of health care in terms of those doctors and nurses that are available, how many hospitals are being built or renovated, or how crowded the doctor's waiting room might be. We mustn't diminish these issues because they are important, and I know that it's easy to remind the members of this House of some of the lessons we have learned from our experience with SARS. Before this year, who had ever heard of severe acute respiratory syndrome? It really was something that was unknown. The answer was that no one in this province really knew or was aware of what SARS is—either in this country or anywhere else. The reality was that it virtually did not exist. But I challenge anyone here today or watching at home to find a colleague, friend or loved one who didn't know about SARS after it hit. Many of us now know someone first-hand who perhaps has been affected, even if it's on a quarantine basis. Even in Brampton, I know we had a couple of paramedics who worked for Toronto services that were self-quarantined at home—and that included their children—in order to make sure that it didn't spread beyond the sources.

SARS has had a profound effect on the way we look at health care and on our economy. Although March and April were difficult months, May was more encouraging. Unfortunately it resurfaced again. However, the good news is that the numbers are now on the decline. As I said earlier, health care is about doctors, nurses, hospitals and much more. It's about early detection, prevention, shorter waiting lists, increasing access to technology, better support for mental health and a stronger focus on keeping people well.

Our 2003 budget addressed this complex mix of factors. Some of the commitments in the 2003-04 budget that are of interest to the people of Ontario are: we'll invest a total budget of \$28.1 billion in health care, including both program and capital expenditures. That investment represents a \$1.9-billion increase in funding from the previous, 2002-03, budget year, which was \$26.2 billion. Where is this \$1.9-billion going: \$10.4 billion for operation of hospitals, including \$130 million one-time funding for diagnostic and medical equipment; \$6.7 billion for OHIP payments to physicians, other practitioners, commercial laboratories and primary care centres; \$3.7 billion to enhance support to long-term-care facilities and community services; and \$2.3 billion for

increased utilization in Ontario drug programs—that represents that increase over the past few years; \$4.5 billion will fund other operating programs, such as Cancer Care Ontario, public health services, emergency health services, Canadian Blood Services; and \$504 million more for health capital investments.

Dr Bette Stephenson, Chair of the Ontario Innovation Trust, and Dr Cal Stiller, Chair of the Ontario Research and Development Challenge Fund, will now chair the new Cancer Research Institute of Ontario. They will co-ordinate the effort to expand and strengthen our research capability by attracting top researchers to the province and keeping the best of our promising scientists right here in Ontario.

The government proposed increased tax support for individuals with disabilities and those caring for infirm dependent relatives, in recognition of the financial changes they face. We travelled with our finance committee and did pre-budget consultations. As chair of that committee, I heard requests from various sources and for assistance the public wanted, in various ways, to address their particular needs. We heard from people who care for infirm or dependent relatives and some of the financial challenges they face. We tried to address that by giving them some tax credits that can leave them with a bit more disposable income to be able to help dependants who are living with them.

Some details on the package of initiatives—this system provides assistance to individuals themselves with disabilities or infirmities, as well as the relatives who help care for them. The care provided by individuals for an infirm spouse or common-law partner goes unrecognized by the current income tax system, as do the efforts of adult children to help their infirm parents or grandparents with modest incomes to remain in their own home.

Three enhancements are proposed to these credits that would take effect January 1, 2003—retroactive to January this year, and of course effective for this tax year when you file next year—subject to us getting the budget through:

First, the amounts to which these tax credits are based would be increased to \$6,637;

Secondly, the budget proposes to expand the caregiver credit and the infirm dependant credit to include spouses or common-law partners who are dependent by reason of mental or physical infirmity and provide support to more caregivers living apart from dependent relatives;

Thirdly, the dependant's income level at which the caregiver credit and infirm dependant credit are reduced would be raised to \$13,050 and both credits would be eliminated when the dependant's income reaches \$19,687.

This increased tax support will provide annual benefits of \$50 million to about 165,000 family caregivers and people with disabilities in this province, providing them with an average saving of about \$300 each. That's significant to people particularly on a fixed income.

More funding has also been committed to helping children with autism and their families with increased

support, and we're looking to increase some of these other services.

We had a number of specific initiatives in health care. Some of the communities that benefited directly from those health care commitments out of this budget are: \$194 million for the London Health Sciences Centre; \$132 million for the Thunder Bay Regional Hospital; \$115 million for the Ottawa hospital—I'm looking for the cuts; where are the cuts?—\$89 million for the Kitchener-Waterloo Grand River Hospital; \$17 million for the Orillia Soldiers' Memorial Hospital—where are the cuts?—\$38 million for the Northumberland Health Care Corporation; \$64 million for the Windsor Regional Hospital, metropolitan site—where are the cuts?—186 new and 184 redeveloped long-term-care beds at the Davy home in my home of Sault Ste Marie—an increase; where are the cuts?—160 new long-term-care beds in the town of Kingsville; 200 new long-term-care beds at the Yee Hong Centre in Markham. Where are the cuts? We've improved access to health care services with 20,000 new long-term-care beds coming on stream by 2004, plus an additional 16,000 beds being renovated to bring them up to standard. These are investments, solid investments, from the budget. There aren't any cuts here.

1730

The Acting Speaker: Members now have up to two minutes for questions or comments.

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): I'm pleased to follow the member from Brampton Centre, who I think was attempting to speak from his heart and saying what he believes to be the truth. But he posed a series of rhetorical references to the cuts: "Where are the cuts?" I think if we heard that once, we must have heard that four or five times.

I want to tell you that we hear a lot of stories out in my part of the world about the bells in hospitals being rung at 3 o'clock in the morning and not having enough nurses on staff to respond. We've heard a lot in our community, when the visiting homemakers were allowed to go down the tubes, go bankrupt because this government changed the rules around home care and left some 7,500 of our vulnerable people stranded for a period of several weeks, some of whom had to move from their home into those long-term-care facilities. Thank goodness the long-term-care facilities are there. But given a choice, people would prefer to see those programs funded so that their first choice, staying in their home, could be realized.

Where are the cuts? The cuts are in the SAM program up in Ancaster, which was funded through a Trillium grant with the specific understanding that the Ministry of Health would come through with long-term funding. That was dumped, and there were some 67 or so seniors left vulnerable there.

Where are the cuts? You say this government wants to see the best researchers in the world here in North America. I guess that doesn't apply if you're an infectious disease specialist. Remember those cuts? You remember them, the five infectious disease specialists who were released a while back?

Where are the cuts? I suggest the honourable member look at youth treatment centres, drug and alcohol programs and some of the mental health facilities that are struggling because of the very cuts you rhetorically ask where they are. I'll tell you, they're out there, and those who have ears to hear and eyes to see should be listening and looking at the real impact of this government's programs.

Mr Kormos: Well, the member may be right. Mr Stockwell didn't see any cuts to the expense account that enabled him to travel to Rome and Paris and London and Glasgow in the highest levels of luxury at the taxpayers' expense. Nobody clipped his wings when he billed \$27,000 worth of tickets, airfare alone—27 grand in tickets. Nobody clipped Mr Stockwell's wings when he was camping out in \$500-a-night hotel rooms in Rome and Paris and London. Nobody was clipping Mr Stockwell's wings when he was being toured around in what was surely, at \$10,000 for a week, a Rolls-Royce or something of similar ilk. Nobody told Mr Stockwell that, taking what ended up to be a vacation to the tune of \$40,000 or \$50,000 at taxpayers' expense. Nobody clipped his wings. Nobody cut his style. Nobody cut his fashion statement as he strolled down the Champs Élysées of Paris or dined at expensive bistros in the Latin Quarter or on the left bank or visited Harrods to bring back some of those scented soaps for the Minister of Labour, the fellow with the expensive towels—

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): Brad Clark.

Mr Kormos: That's right—so that after the Minister of Labour, Mr Clark, bathed himself with these Parisian scented soaps after a sweaty day in cabinet, he could towel himself off with these Egyptian, 100% combed cotton, plush towels being paid for by the taxpayer. Those are the kind of cuts we were looking for, quite frankly.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Scarborough Centre.

Ms Mushinski: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I too am very pleased to join in this debate this afternoon, and also wish to congratulate you for the exemplary job you have done in the chair. I certainly join with my colleague from Brampton Centre in recognizing that and congratulating you for that, Mr Speaker.

Notwithstanding that I have rather a lot of reading material here on my desk, I have been listening quite intently to this discussion this afternoon. I guess it is the nature of the opposition to oppose and to criticize, but it's really interesting that they always conveniently forget the 10 lost years. They talk about cuts, but I guess one has to be reminded, as has been suggested by my colleague from Brampton Centre, of those 10 lost years in terms of increases, not cuts. They were tax increases; there were close to 70 tax increases.

When we talk about cuts, I guess we can say, "Yes, the number of jobs in this province indeed was cut as taxes were increased." I for one can remember the commercial concentration tax, which was a huge tax increase

and a burden imposed on municipalities, certainly within the GTA, that actually drove jobs away. So when my honourable friend from Brampton Centre speaks about this government and the tax decreases, they have led to significant increases in expenditures on health care and education, the kinds of services we would expect to protect.

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): I just want to compliment the member from Brampton Centre for bringing back to us some of the old announcements we keep hearing from the government on a day-to-day basis. I would mention to the member and to the government side as well to follow up with action the announcements they keep making.

The budget is the most important document and really contains the will and the ways the government wants to govern the province and its citizens for the next short while.

Let me take you back for a minute to the now infamous Bill 26—I'm sure you remember very well. I think a lot of what we're seeing today started with that foundation, that infamous Bill 26. We have seen the dismantling, if you will, of the Common Sense Revolution because of Bill 26. But the effects are still here today, and we have to ask ourselves, "If they have increased funding in practically every department, as they say, especially the best, the biggest, the most important ones—health care, education, the environment and so forth—if they have infused so many other hundreds of millions of dollars, then how come we are worse off today in every particular department than we were eight, nine, 10 years ago?" What happened? Something is not coinciding. Either they have made the announcement and the money has not been flowing, or the problem is the accountability is completely wrong.

Mr Speaker, I hope to continue when I get my five or 10 minutes on this, but I want to compliment the member from Brampton Centre on his presentation.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Brampton Centre now has up to two minutes to respond.

1740

Mr Spina: Thank you to all the members for their comments. The member from Niagara Centre has a career in art, I know, because he paints such an amazing picture from dastardly deeds of the other people. I guess he didn't cut such a striking pose as a Sunshine Boy many years ago, which got him in trouble. But that's all right; that's history now.

My friend from York West says, "Look around you, folks. This province is worse in every sector than it was when this government took office." I would directly challenge that 150%, because in 1995, we made a bunch of commitments and we came out with a series of promises. This was the only party in modern history that virtually delivered every promise that we had in the 1995 Common Sense Revolution, and we followed through with the 1999 election campaign. I remind the members opposite: this is the first government with back-to-back majority governments since John Robarts.

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre): And why?

Mr Spina: Because we delivered on what we promised, and that's what people remember. I remember in 1995 people saying to me, "Hell, if you deliver half of this, I'll vote for you again." In 1999, they said, "Holy cow, we didn't think you guys would really do it, but you did. You can count on my support once again."

When I listed off the number of investments in health care, they weren't commitments that are coming; many of them were already spent and implemented for this year. So not empty promises: we deliver.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): I welcome the opportunity to have a few words in the debate on this motion today. I remind those who are perhaps watching at home that the motion reads, "That this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government." Well, I'm afraid I can't do that, and I might as well say that at the outset. The folks at home look at some of these issues in a very simple way. I know we talk about billions of dollars; we talk about hundreds of millions of dollars like it's something we spend every day. That's a lot of money. They think about that money, but they also think about how the government of the day can afford to spend that kind of money. How do they arrive at the kind of money they're going to spend, and how do they decide how they're going to spend this money?

During the winter break, I had the opportunity to visit the Arner Stop, a coffee shop in my riding, on many occasions, or go to the Country Cafe in Cottam and sit around and have a coffee. I get asked those questions. So when we were off during the break, I said, "Well, what will happen is, we'll go back into session somewhere in the middle of March, we'll continue on until the end of June, and the government will carry out its business." As we all know, that didn't happen. The Premier decided to prorogue, or end the session.

Then I was asked, "Bruce, what do we do now? What happens now?" I said, "What will happen is the Premier will decide when the Legislature is to reconvene, and at that time they will present a speech from the throne that will lay out in a general way what the government's plans are. And following that will be a budget that will support those plans." We know that went astray this time too. We didn't come back and have a budget; we had a budget up in a car parts plant somewhere—a so-called budget. Quite frankly, I shared the view of many of those in my constituency that it was an opportunity for public relations. Nevertheless, the government called it a budget and they had books that had all kinds of figures to tell us how they were going to spend their money.

They said, "Well, what happened to the throne speech that's supposed to come before the budget?" I said, "This time, we're going to have a throne speech after the budget, because the government said in The Promise of Ontario that they went out to seek the advice of the citizens of the province of Ontario. 'What do you want us to put in the throne speech? What's your vision? What do

you see as the future of Ontario?' But," I said, "that's kind of difficult because they've already said what they're going to spend the money on. In my view, they've got the cart before the horse." Many of the people in rural Ontario, who understand what it means to put the cart before the horse, understood that, that it's awfully difficult to lay out the vision and ask people how they want their money spent when you've already decided how you're going to spend their money. So that raised some confusion in their minds.

Then, when we did get the figures that the government was interested in using as part of its budget, some of us waited to hear what others had to say. So that we would not be too presumptuous, we were interested in what third parties had to say.

Here's what Standard and Poor's says about the Ernie Eves budget in deficit. May 15: "The venerable Standard and Poor's today joined the chorus of banks and credit rating agencies reporting the Ernie Eves government is running a major deficit." All I had to do was point out to those at the Arner Stop or the Country Kitchen that experts are saying the great management government of this past eight years is running a major deficit. My constituents said, "How can that be? They stand up and tell us that they are the money managers. In fact, they're not even the government; they came to fix government. What a way to fix it," the folks at home said, "to run a deficit."

I quote from Standard and Poor's. "Standard and Poor's expects the province to post an overall deficit of 1.7% of operating revenues in fiscal 2004 ... following a modest overall deficit of 0.1% of revenues in fiscal 2003," the formidable credit rating agency said in a release. "Well," the folks said, "that doesn't sound like very much, 1.7%, 0.1%." When you translate it into dollars for the folks at home and say, "You know, that represents \$2.2 billion that this government is going to have to find somewhere," the folks at home say, "That's easy. They'll tell you where they're going to find that kind of money, won't they? That's what we have to do on our farms. That's what we have to do in our businesses. That's what we have to do in our municipalities."

So we come and ask the Minister of Finance, "Where are you going to find \$2.2 billion? What are you going to sell?" She couldn't tell us, or wouldn't tell us. I'm not sure which is the case, but I do know she wouldn't tell us. The folks back at home all say, "How can that be? How could I on my farm, for example, say that I'm going to just sell some of the assets? We won't deal in billions, because on the farm you can only deal in thousands of dollars, but how am I going to get, say, \$22,000? What assets am I going to sell? I have to decide what I can do without or what I think my family can do without." This confuses the folks at home. It really confuses them.

Then they say to me, "I understand the government's going to find savings, and that's good. The government's going to find \$800 million in savings." That's when it becomes a lot of money to the folks at home. They say, "Eight hundred million dollars, if they're going to cut

civil service staff, is a lot of staff. What kind of services are we going to lose? If they're going to start looking in some major areas like health care, education and areas where they've cut before, like the environment, or where they cut \$181 million out of the budget in safety and security," the folks at the Arner Stop say, "I'm not so sure that we can do without those services. I think it's incumbent on the government"—although "incumbent" is a pretty big word. We don't talk about those kinds of things at home. We just think, "I think it's the government's job to tell us where they're going to save that \$800 million." Are we going to have to pay for more, like we have since the last time they cut, and give tax cuts to big corporations? Are we going to have to pay more for our services? Are our Drive Clean costs going to go up when we go to get our car checked? Is that going to be a grab they're going to make? Or is there some other area that has been government services where we're now going to have to pay \$25, \$30 or \$40, or an additional \$25, \$30 or \$40?

Those are the questions that are asked at home. Those are the questions that I'd like to be able to answer to my constituents, but unfortunately the answers haven't been given by this government. Where are we going to get a couple of billion dollars in the sale of assets? I have to tell them, "I don't know." The government won't help me answer that question. Where are we going to have \$800 million in savings? I have to tell the folks at home, "I don't know."

But I tell the folks at home this: when they don't come clean with you, when they don't start to tell you those kinds of things, then I'm a little concerned about what they aren't telling us and what it really might mean for us. Thank you, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: I appreciate the member ending on that note, because he well knows that the standing orders require me now to put the question.

Therefore, on Wednesday, May 21, 2003, Mrs Ecker moved, seconded by Mr Eves, that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

Is it the pleasure of the House that Mrs Ecker's motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please indicate by saying "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1752 to 1802.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour of Mrs Ecker's motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted
Baird, John R.
Barrett, Toby
Beaubien, Marcel
Chudleigh, Ted
Clark, Brad
Clement, Tony
Coburn, Brian
DeFaria, Carl
Dunlop, Garfield
Ecker, Janet
Elliott, Brenda
Eves, Ernie
Galt, Doug
Gilchrist, Steve
Gill, Raminder
Guzzo, Garry J.

Hardeman, Ernie
Hudak, Tim
Jackson, Cameron
Johns, Helen
Johnson, Bert
Kells, Morley
Klees, Frank
Marland, Margaret
Martiniuk, Gerry
Maves, Bart
Mazzilli, Frank
McDonald, AL
Miller, Norm
Molinari, Tina R.
Munro, Julia
Murdoch, Bill
Mushinski, Marilyn

Newman, Dan
O'Toole, John
Ouellette, Jerry J.
Runciman, Robert W.
Sampson, Rob
Spina, Joseph
Sterling, Norman W.
Stewart, R. Gary
Tsubouchi, David H.
Turnbull, David
Wettlaufer, Wayne
Wilson, Jim
Witmer, Elizabeth
Wood, Bob
Young, David

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed to the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Agostino, Dominic
Bartolucci, Rick
Bountrogianni, Marie
Boyer, Claudette
Bradley, James J.
Bryant, Michael
Caplan, David
Churley, Marilyn
Cleary, John C.
Conway, Sean G.
Cordiano, Joseph
Crozier, Bruce

Di Cocco, Caroline
Dombrowsky, Leona
Duncan, Dwight
Gerretsen, John
Gravelle, Michael
Hampton, Howard
Hoy, Pat
Kormos, Peter
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Levac, David
Martel, Shelley
McGuinty, Dalton

McMeekin, Ted
Parsons, Ernie
Peters, Steve
Phillips, Gerry
Prue, Michael
Pupatello, Sandra
Ramsay, David
Sergio, Mario
Smitherman, George
Sorbara, Greg

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 49; the nays are 34.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

It is therefore resolved that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

It now being after 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 6:45 this evening.

The House adjourned at 1806.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon / L'hon James K. Bartleman
 Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Gary Carr
 Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers
 Deputy Clerk / Sous-greffière: Deborah Deller
 Clerks at the Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman
 Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

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Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford	Tascona, Joseph N. (PC)	Halton	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)
Beaches-East York	Prue, Michael (ND)	Hamilton East / -Est	Agostino, Dominic (L)
Bramalea-Gore-Malton- Springdale	Gill, Raminder (PC)	Hamilton Mountain	Bountrogianni, Marie (L)
Brampton Centre / -Centre	Spina, Joseph (PC)	Hamilton West / -Ouest	Christopherson, David (ND)
Brampton West-Mississauga / Brampton-Ouest-Mississauga	Clement, Hon / L'hon Tony (PC) Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée	Hastings-Frontenac- Lennox and Addington	Dombrowsky, Leona (L)
Brant	Levac, Dave (L)	Huron-Bruce	Johns, Hon / L'hon Helen (PC) Minister of Agriculture and Food / ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation
Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Kenora-Rainy River	Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Burlington	Jackson, Cameron (PC)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Gerretsen, John (L)
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Kitchener Centre / -Centre	Wettlaufer, Wayne (PC)
Chatham-Kent Essex	Hoy, Pat (L)	Kitchener-Waterloo	Witmer, Hon / L'hon Elizabeth (PC) Deputy Premier, Minister of Education / vice-première ministre, ministre de l'Éducation
Davenport	Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	Beaubien, Marcel (PC)
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Essex	Crozier, Bruce (L)		
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Etobicoke North / -Nord	Hastings, John (PC)		
Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Kells, Morley (PC)		
Glengarry-Prescott-Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)		
Guelph-Wellington	Elliott, Hon / L'hon Brenda (PC) Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services / ministre des Services à la collectivité, à la famille et à l'enfance		

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No. 22B

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of Ontario

Fourth Session, 37th Parliament

Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario

Quatrième session, 37^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Monday 9 June 2003

Lundi 9 juin 2003



Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 9 June 2003

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 9 juin 2003

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ONTARIO HOME PROPERTY TAX RELIEF FOR SENIORS ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 SUR L'ALLÈGEMENT DE L'IMPÔT FONCIER RÉSIDENTIEL POUR LES PERSONNES ÂGÉES DE L'ONTARIO

Resuming the debate adjourned on June 2, 2003, on the motion for second reading of Bill 43, An Act to provide Ontario home property tax relief for seniors / *Projet de loi 43, Loi prévoyant un allègement de l'impôt foncier résidentiel pour les personnes âgées de l'Ontario.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr David Christopherson): It's my understanding that the member for Niagara Centre had concluded his 20 minutes on the floor. Therefore, since he is present this evening, we will begin with two-minute responses. The floor is open.

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton Centre): It's always interesting to hear the member from Niagara Centre and his comments. I always thought he would be a strong proponent of providing some relief for seniors, particularly those on fixed incomes. I'm sure if he had the opportunity to input on the parameters of who should qualify for this relief, he would likely welcome that. Perhaps he may have that opportunity. But if he votes against it, unfortunately I think it would be a vote against seniors.

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): The only positive thing with respect to this rebate for seniors is that we are actually talking about seniors. For the last few years, if there is one group that has been hit and hit hard, it is seniors. This is what they are telling me: "This may be because there is an election coming. They want to give us something." Unfortunately, there are seniors out there who need help and they will accept anything the government brings their way. They're in such dire need because over the years they have been hit with user fees for drugs, and other drugs have been taken off the Ontario drug benefit plan. I mean, you name it—hydro bills went up, and water, gas, electricity and everything else.

One thing that didn't go up was their measly monthly pensions. Pensions did not go up. So they are saying,

"We welcome anything. It is not much. It's not enough compensation for what they did to us during the last few years, but, hey, anything that is going to come our way." Let me say to the government that maybe it's too little, too late. Seniors deserve a lot more than they are getting. They do deserve a lot more than they are getting. It would be my suggestion to the government to review it and say to seniors, "You know, we have been cutting too far and too deep. We've been hitting you too hard and it's about time that we say, 'Mea culpa.' Let's give the seniors the recognition that they really and truly deserve so they can say, 'Finally, the government is coming our way.'"

1850

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): My colleague, Mr Kormos, made it clear that New Democrats are opposing this move. We voted against it once, and we're going to continue to do so. I'm glad that one of the Conservative members mentioned seniors, because I think it's important to hear what seniors have to say about this proposal. This comes from a Toronto Star article, dated April 5, 2003:

"Pensioner Mae Harman admits it's a struggle to pay ever-increasing property taxes on her modest north Toronto bungalow.

"But she wants no part of last week's provincial budget plan to give her a rebate on the education portion of her local tax bill.

"As a senior I just think it's deplorable," says the 83-year-old co-founder of the Ontario Coalition of Seniors' Organizations.

"I'd certainly like to get some extra money, but not at the expense of public education," she says. "Seniors value education and believe it's important to support it."

Here's another quotation: "The sop to seniors of relief from education taxes, which will most benefit those with the most expensive properties, is an insult to grandparents and the majority of seniors. It's totally ridiculous," says Harman, whose coalition includes more than 150 groups, representing more than 500,000 seniors across the province."

She wasn't the only one. Here are friends of the Tories: "John Williamson, Ontario director of the Canadian Taxpayers' Federation, says his organization's main problem with the measure is that it reverses the 1999 Tory pledge to give all property taxpayers a break....

"This is a broken promise on the eve of an election leaving a lot of people high and dry and pandering to an

important demographic group for the Conservative Party,' he says. 'It's not good tax policy and it's very poor public policy.'"

So there's what some people do think of this.

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre): The issue of a seniors' tax credit on their property taxes is one that has been around for a long time. A number of the seniors in my riding have approached me over the last eight years. They have pushed for this, and pushed for it very hard, I will add. They said they've made their contributions to society. They feel that as long as the government is increasing the amount of money that it is funding public education, which we are—we're funding it to the tune of over \$16 billion this year—they can't see why they can't have a tax break after all the contributions they made. It is not an exaggeration to say that I've had more than 100, over the course of the last eight years, indicate to me that they felt some relief was in order.

Now, if you take into account that only a small minority of people actually come to their MPP and speak to them, I think you get an idea of how many seniors really want this. They know that the Liberals' propaganda about "education cutbacks" is just that: propaganda. There have been no cutbacks. The funding is ever-greater, in spite of a reduced enrolment—a reduced enrolment, and the boards are still getting more money.

I know you have a hard time with that on the Liberal side. Through you, Speaker, I know that the Liberals have a hard time with that, but that is a fact of life. The seniors really feel that they're entitled to some of this money. The vast majority of seniors are in low middle-income or low-income areas. They want any advantage they can to hold on to their properties, in some cases the houses they have had all their lives, in some cases their cottages that have been in the family for four and five generations. They would just like to hold on to this.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Niagara Centre has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Well, as a matter of fact, on Saturday evening I was at the Chetwood Seniors' Centre in west St Catharines. They had their annual dinner, and some of the St Catharines city councillors and I were serving dinner. A good number of seniors there; a whole lot of good folks. I know most of them. Good people, decent people. I know this government would have wanted them to be talking about Bill 43—not one concern raised about Bill 43. What they were mostly concerned about was the high-priced, taxpayer-funded junket taken by one Chris Stockwell, then Minister of Energy, through Europe. They were asking me, "Did we hear you say he spent \$27,000 on airline tickets alone?" I said, "Yup; 27 grand of your money on airfare alone."

They were questioning me, "Is it true that it cost 10 grand for his ground transportation for one week in Paris?" I went, "Yup; 10 grand paid for by the OPG." It might have been a little more, but that's a conservative estimate.

They said, "He really went to Rome, London, Paris and Glasgow on the taxpayers' tab?" I said, "Yup."

They were saying, "He really spent 500 bucks a night on hotel room suites?" I went, "Yup."

These are folks who are hard-pressed to find the money to spend a couple of weeks in Florida in the wintertime because they can't afford the health insurance premiums. These are people who worked hard all their lives and have seen their pensions diminished because this government hasn't enacted the pension reform that New Democrats are proposing to protect workers' pensions and fix pension plans. These are people who are scared that their grandkids aren't going to be able to go to college and university because tuition fees have increased by over 150% in the last eight years. That's what seniors were concerned about, not Bill 43.

The Acting Speaker: The floor is open for further debate.

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): It's a pleasure to rise tonight on behalf of our government to speak about Bill 43, the Ontario Home Property Tax Relief for Seniors Act, 2003. When I listen to some of the comments I've heard in this House with regard to seniors—first of all, I should qualify that both of my parents are still alive so I know what seniors are all about. My mother is 90 years old and my father is 92 years old, so I know what it's like to deal with seniors. I find it difficult to believe that on the weekend, all that seniors in Welland wanted to talk about is some junket. The seniors in my riding call the office, and all they want to know is how they can apply for this credit. That's what they want to know. I'm sure the member for Chatham-Kent Essex, my colleague just next to me, has the same problem. There are an awful lot of seniors in this riding who want to know how they can apply for this credit.

Today we have more than 1.5 million of Ontario's approximately 12 million people who are age 65 and over. I dare say that each and every one of us is getting closer and closer to that, although some of us are a little further, but I certainly speak on my behalf and some of my colleagues. Understanding the implications for the future, the government is undertaking numerous initiatives to prepare for our rapidly aging population. If passed, this bill would ensure a safe and secure future for the seniors in this province.

As Minister Ecker said in her budget statement, "Ontario owes much to its seniors. They are our grandparents and parents, our aunts and uncles. Our seniors are the pioneers and builders who created this prosperous province we enjoy today." Our seniors have worked hard all their lives and deserve our government's consideration to ease them into their retirement. I may add that some are well into their retirement. Many seniors are living with rising costs such as property taxes that eat into their fixed incomes.

I do agree that many seniors face undue financial pressures, but I find it difficult that somebody in the same tone would vote against this particular bill. If they truly believe that seniors are facing undue financial pressure,

why would they vote against giving somebody a tax break, a refund? That's more money in their pockets, wallets and purses.

The 2003 budget supports these seniors by proposing a number of initiatives that would help them remain in their own homes and assist them with rising costs.

Let's talk about Ontario home property tax relief for seniors. The Ontario Home Property Tax Relief for Seniors Act proposes to complete the government's commitment to reduce residential education property taxes. Under this bill, seniors would be eligible for a refund of the residential education portion of the property taxes they currently pay on their principal residence or the unit they rent.

1900

The program has been designed to be simple and provide education property tax relief to all eligible seniors, regardless of their incomes. It also recognizes that many seniors rely on incomes that are fixed.

We've heard an awful lot about pensions and some of the challenges that some of the pension funds are facing. It's not the first time that this has occurred. There's no doubt that the stock market has been impacted very negatively in the past few years, and consequently, it certainly impacts on the pension funds.

The member across the way was talking about pensions that do not go up. Well, whether it's a federal pension plan or a private pension plan, many benefits are fixed; there's no doubt about it. Some of them are geared to inflation or to the cost of living, but technically, if you're stuck with a pension at \$1,000, probably 10 years later, down the road, it's going to be pretty close to that. Again, I find it very difficult that anyone would vote against a bill that proposes to give somebody a little bit of financial relief.

The new application-based credit would be made available to both senior homeowners and senior tenants. For 2003, seniors who own or rent their home would be eligible for a credit that reimburses their portion of the residential education property tax for the latter half of the year. Starting in 2004, the relief would be based on the full year's residential education property tax paid. We estimate that this measure would provide \$450 million a year in new benefits. That would be an average annual net saving of \$475 for 945,000 senior households.

The government proposes to provide this new relief program in addition to the existing Ontario tax credits for seniors. Seniors would still be able to claim the property tax credit, but only on the portion not already credited through the proposed new Ontario home property tax relief for seniors program.

The program would require that seniors complete an application form. Once the application is processed, eligible seniors would be fully reimbursed for the residential education tax paid for the period after July 1, 2003. Pending approval of the Legislature, the delivery of the cheques under this new program would likely begin in December 2003.

The province is committed to reducing education property tax burdens on residential and business taxpayers. The province is also committed to reducing education property taxes by more than \$1 billion by 2005. As a matter of fact, with the proposed new Ontario home property tax relief for seniors program, property tax burdens would be reduced by a total of over \$1.2 billion by 2005.

Property taxpayers are already saving more than \$650 million due to the business and residential education property tax cuts to date. With the proposed Ontario home property tax relief for seniors program, these savings would rise to more than \$875 million this year.

To further ensure that all Ontario taxpayers benefit from the education tax cuts, following the 2003 reassessment the province lowered education property tax rates to offset any potential increases resulting from rising property values.

This new relief measure for seniors will not affect our education funding. Even while continuing to cut education property taxes in 2003-04, the government committed more than \$15.3 billion in funding to strengthen the education system. Spending on public education is expected to increase to \$16.2 billion for the year 2005-06, more than education spending under any previous provincial government.

Together with the personal income tax age credit, additional support for seniors through the Ontario property and sales tax credit and the benefit from Ontario's personal income tax cuts, this new property tax relief initiative would mean \$2.5 billion in tax savings per year to our seniors.

The ongoing contributions of Ontario's seniors continue to support Ontario's success and prosperity. I think we've acknowledged that recently with the introduction of the bill whereby, at age 65, if you're not ready to retire, you're not forced to retire. I think this type of legislation was long overdue.

As a group, however, senior citizens have lower average incomes than the population as a whole and many rely on fixed incomes. That's why I find it very difficult that anyone in this House would vote against a bill of this nature, to provide additional funding for vulnerable people like seniors who live on fixed incomes and pensions that may not be geared to the cost of living or inflation.

Ontario's personal income tax system already provides significant recognition for these different groups through a variety of tax credits. Ontario's age credit, for example, will deliver more than \$200 million in tax savings this year to low- and moderate-income seniors. Ontario property and sales tax credits provide enriched benefits for seniors that deliver an additional \$300 million in income-tax-based support to seniors and their families. Seniors are also saving \$1.6 billion this year as a result of Ontario's tax cuts to date.

In addition, we are committed to helping seniors in other ways. Exempting life leases from land transfer tax is another measure introduced in the 2003 budget to give

seniors a broader range of housing options. I must point out that life leases are getting popular not only in Toronto but in rural Ontario. In my own community of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, many groups are initiating this type of housing. It's good housing, it's affordable housing, and we need to give seniors all the help they can with this type of housing.

A life lease is a form of seniors' housing where seniors receive the exclusive right to occupy a residential unit for life in return for an upfront payment and monthly maintenance fees. Life lease projects are mostly sponsored by religious and charitable groups and provide a sense of community for seniors in the complex. Life lease transactions that will qualify for the exemption are those agreements between a registered charity under the federal Income Tax Act or a non-profit organization as specified in the regulation, and the purchaser of the life lease.

In recognizing the unique nature of life leases, the government will exempt from land transfer tax life leases that are sponsored by registered charities or non-profit organizations. The exemption will be retroactive to when land transfer tax was applied to the unregistered property. We expect this measure to provide an average savings of \$1,500 per unit.

I would dare seniors who live in every riding in Ontario to call the office of every member of provincial Parliament tomorrow and find out, especially if they live in a life lease unit, whether they want their rebate back. It would be interesting to have a poll and see how many say they don't want their rebate back.

As I've said before, our government is concerned that the needs of seniors are met. Our vision is to have in place all the support that seniors require to live safely and with dignity. As such, our measures in the 2003 Ontario budget are broad-based to assist seniors in many areas.

We propose improvements to the credits supporting individuals with disabilities and family caregivers, effective January 1, 2003. Recent research from Health Canada indicates that the majority of family caregivers are women and 25% are seniors. Health Canada also found that close to half of these caregivers incur out-of-pocket expenses to care for their family members. By improving tax support for people with disabilities and family caregivers who look after infirm parents, spouses and other dependent relatives, we would be providing annual benefits of \$50 million to about 165,000 people.

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Currently Ontario's tax system provides assistance to individuals with disabilities and people who care for disabled or infirm family members. This assistance is provided through a number of non-refundable tax credits, including the disability credit, the caregiver credit and the infirm dependant credit. However, the care provided by individuals for an infirm spouse or common-law partner goes unrecognized by the current income tax system, as do the efforts of adult children to have their infirm parents or grandparents with modest incomes remain in their own homes.

This government is proposing three enhancements to these credits effective January 1, 2003. First, the amounts on which these tax credits are based would be increased to \$6,637. Second, the government proposes to expand the caregiver credit and the infirm dependant credit to include spouses or common-law partners who are dependent by reason of mental or physical infirmity and to provide support to more caregivers living apart from dependent relatives. Third, the dependant's income level at which their caregiver credit and infirm dependant credit are reduced would be raised to \$13,050, and both credits would be eliminated when the dependant's income reaches \$19,687. This increased tax support would provide average savings of about \$300 each to 165,000 caregivers and people with disabilities. The government is also proposing to work with the federal government and representatives for caregivers and the disabled community to simplify the existing array of personal income tax supports for these individuals and to provide overall enriched benefits through the income tax system.

Another initiative for seniors that I would like to point out is that the province proposes to provide \$10 million annually to give seniors and others access to 15,000 cataract surgeries each year. Cataract surgery is the most commonly performed surgical procedure in North America. As the population ages, the demand for cataract surgery will also increase. This government's proactive approach to addressing the waiting time will have a positive effect on thousands of Ontarians whose sight is affected by cataracts. Many seniors and others whose sight is affected by cataracts will be able to continue leading independent lives with the gift of sight.

Osteoporosis is another disease that strikes too many of our seniors. Osteoporosis is the thinning of bones, which decreases bone strength, making them more fragile and likely to break. To fight this disease, the government plans to invest \$7 million annually to develop and implement a comprehensive osteoporosis action plan to improve the prevention, management and treatment of osteoporosis. The Ontario Women's Health Council has indicated that hip fractures related to osteoporosis are a serious problem in older adults, resulting in death in up to 20% of cases and disability in up to 50% of those who survive.

An estimated 530,000 Ontarians are affected by osteoporosis, including one in four women and one in eight men over 50. Osteoporosis costs Ontario over \$400 million per year for treatment and care. Given the increasing proportion of older people in the population, improving prevention, detection and diagnosis and improving access to effective therapies will benefit both seniors and the government.

Apart from the new initiatives I mentioned, the government's commitment to seniors is also sustained through continued funding to maintain existing programs and services. We plan an increase of about \$400 million to enhance supports for residents in long-term-care facilities and to continue the expansion of long-term-care

beds. Our government's multi-year long-term-care investment plan is the biggest health care investment in Canadian history. Through this investment plan, the province is bringing 20,000 long-term-care beds on stream by the end of 2004 and is renovating up to 16,000 beds to bring them up to standard.

In September 1999, the province announced that Canada's first comprehensive provincial strategy was in place to combat Alzheimer's disease. We have allocated \$68.4 million over five years to Ontario's strategy for Alzheimer's disease and related dementias. The strategy's 10 initiatives are designed to respond to the needs of people with Alzheimer's disease and related dementias, their caregivers and their families. For example, as part of our Alzheimer's strategy, in March 2002 we produced a guide to advanced care planning, an Alzheimer's strategy initiative that demonstrates our government's commitment to ensuring that people afflicted with this terrible disease have choices and a sense of confidence that their wishes about their future care will be understood and respected by loved ones and health care professionals.

Seniors have earned our gratitude and the right to a safe and secure retirement. What better way to repay them than ensuring these rights through the property tax measures contained in this bill? Again, I challenge the seniors who might be listening tonight to call their MPP's office tomorrow to make sure they know how to apply for them. I know that some day members of Parliament will find it very difficult to support seniors, but I urge all seniors to call their member's office tomorrow morning and get their applications.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): I'm pleased to enter this debate. I've been working hard on issues that are of interest to seniors in my riding, and indeed those same issues fall across this great province of ours. One of the issues that came to my office from many persons—and in this case I'm speaking about seniors—was the question of why retroactive gas charges from two years ago were allowed to occur in my region of the province. Seniors called my office, and they were crying on the telephone wondering why the government would allow a retroactive charge of this magnitude from two years prior to be introduced on their natural gas bills. They were literally crying on the phone, wondering how they were going to be able to pay these bills. They wondered who was protecting them from retroactive gas charges from some two years ago, added on to an already high bill they were paying at the current time.

They called and asked me why their parents—I assume their parents were quite aged, because we were talking to seniors at the time—were only getting one bath a week in a nursing home. I had many, many calls wondering who was protecting their parents in a nursing home. They were also wondering why the fees in that nursing home were going up 15% and how they were going to provide for themselves in the future. They wondered who was protecting them from high gasoline

prices. I had many calls on that issue. These people were also saying to me that they did not have a pension from the workplace; they depended only on the government pension. They were wondering how on earth they were going to make ends meet.

Ms Martel: I want to focus on the comment the member made that the property tax credit would benefit vulnerable seniors, and how can you be against that—if only that were true. The fact of the matter is that there is already a property tax credit for low-income seniors to ensure that those low-income seniors can remain in their own homes. That property tax credit that was already in existence is capped to ensure that the money goes to those seniors who really need it.

Now the government is proposing to remove the cap, so we're going to pay property taxes for the well-to-do and the well-off who don't need it and shouldn't get it at all. I say to people who are watching tonight: tell me about these vulnerable Ontarians. Cable television magnate Ted Rogers and his wife, Loretta, will see the tax bill on their \$5.5-million Toronto home reduced by more than \$23,000 annually. Media tycoon Ken Thomson and Barrick Gold founder and chairman Peter Munk, with both of those having homes assessed at about \$5.3 million respectively here in Toronto, are each going to pay about \$22,500 less in property taxes under this proposal. The annual property taxes on the \$3.6-million home of former Lieutenant Governor Hal Jackman will decline by about \$15,000, while singer Gordon Lightfoot is going to save nearly \$17,000 on his \$4-million Toronto home once he turns 65.

I ask people who are watching out there, does that sound like vulnerable seniors to you? Does that sound like seniors who really need a break on their property taxes? The answer is, absolutely not. If the government really wanted to help vulnerable seniors, they would keep in place the existing tax credit, which does ensure that money goes to low-income seniors.

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Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Culture): I'd like to congratulate my colleague the member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex for his speech.

Yesterday I had the fortune to be at the 90th birthday party for Carman Lewis, who is quite a well-known person in Markham. About 200 people went through his reception, mainly seniors. These are the people we are trying to help. I'll tell you a little bit about Carman Lewis while I have the floor.

Carman originally was a farmer; he had a dairy farm. Then he moved from that. At one point in time he had a pharmacy. He also would, in the middle of winter, go out and saw ice out of the mill pond in Markham. He would store it on his farm and would deliver it in the summertime when people needed ice in those days. He also went into the stationery business at one point in time. So Carman has done a number of things.

Let me tell you something else about Carman Lewis. Carman is also a Markham Lion, as am I. But Carman

was one of the original founding members of the Lions Club in Markham and well acknowledged for his many deeds and contributions to our community in Markham. He has also been inaugurated into the Markham Seniors Hall of Fame. Carman has done so many things, and there are many stories about him, but I will tell you about his family as well. They are getting older too, many of them seniors as well who will benefit from the seniors' property tax relief. But his nephew, John Webster, is well known to many people because John Webster is the North American town crier champion. He certainly was there and emceed the event. Everyone who was there—there were seniors who had been around town for 50 or 60 years, and all of them, of course, will benefit from this tax relief.

This is what we're doing it for: the ordinary seniors in my community and your community, Speaker, and every community within the Legislature. That's the whole intent. We owe so much to seniors across this province, and it's about time we said thank you to them.

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): I do want to reference the statement made by the member from the government who suggested that perhaps members on this side of the House don't care about seniors. I care very much about seniors, and I've been listening very carefully to seniors in my riding.

I have here this evening a letter written by a senior. She writes to me,

"Dear Leona:

"I recently received a letter from the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care stating my husband's cost for his stay" at the local nursing home "is once again increasing. When he entered [in] February 2003 I understood it had recently been increased. He states in his letter," meaning the minister, "that the increase ... is based on our pension increases.

"Between my husband and I we get" a \$5-a-month increase in their pension.

This constituent writes to me that her husband's annual income is \$17,969, and her annual income is \$16,479. She further states that it takes all of his income and some of hers to pay for his stay in the nursing home. "I have a house and car to keep up." By the way, the husband is 85 and the wife is 82. "I have a house and car to keep up as I have to drive to Selby to see my husband." Her son helps her out with this.

She says, "It's ironic that people over 80 years old have to skimp to live." We know that with Bill 43 these people will be eligible for perhaps \$20 a month in a tax rebate—\$20 a month. I would suggest that is not going to assist this family significantly.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex now has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr Beaubien: I would like to thank my colleagues from Chatham-Kent Essex, Nickel Belt, Markham, and Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington.

With regard to the comment made by the last speaker, I would like to have that person's name and address so

that maybe I can be in touch with her, because basically this is the perfect program that will help this person to maintain a standard of living that would provide some dignity in the future.

With regard to protecting parents in nursing homes, as I pointed out in my opening statement, I have a father who is 92 years old who has been confined to a nursing home for 13 years. I'm there every week to make sure he has proper care. That's my responsibility.

With regard to a comment by the speaker from Nickel Belt, household income is less than \$25,000 a year in 49% of seniors' households. So we can pick out the Ted Rogers of the world who live in \$7-million mansions, but 49% of seniors in this province live on less than \$25,000 a year. When we break it to \$25,000 to \$50,000 a year, it's another 33%, so that's 82% of the seniors in this province who live on incomes of less than \$50,000. Then if we break it to \$50,000 to \$75,000, it's another 11%. So the large majority of seniors in this province live with incomes of less than \$75,000, and when we look at \$50,000, it's 82% of the seniors in this province.

For anyone who has the audacity to say that this is not helping seniors with low incomes—of course I agree that there are some people who are going to benefit, but they are few and far between. After all, government programs are there to look after the masses in the province, and that's exactly what this program is going to do.

The Acting Speaker: The House will know that by prior agreement the official opposition was allowed to stand down their leadoff debate. It is now time in rotation for that debate, and I look to the member for Kingston and the Islands to lead off that debate.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): This is our leadoff speech on this issue, and I'll be sharing my time with the member from Essex and the member from York West.

I was listening to the debate a bit earlier, and it's kind of interesting that the Conservatives would like everyone to believe that it's a very simple question: "Do you want seniors to get a rebate or don't you want them to get a rebate?" Of course, we know the issue and the question are much more complicated than that. It is not, should all seniors get a rebate? The question is, how should the money for the rebate be extended and expended among the senior citizens of our province? That's the real issue. But I'll get to that in a few minutes.

First of all, I'd like to pay tribute to all the seniors in Ontario, because this is Seniors' Month and we all know that seniors have contributed an awful lot to this province over the years and that we, our generation and the generations to come, are really the beneficiaries of that. When you look at the general quality of life that we enjoy compared to the quality of life that was around 40, 50 or 70 years ago, we can certainly say that the vast majority of Ontarians live in a healthier society and are much better off. I think the seniors of this province have an awful lot to do with that. They are the people who created the society that we live in today.

This is also a perfect opportunity for me to congratulate the Kingston Seniors Centre, which was officially opened this past Friday. It's in a converted school, a one-storey school which as a matter of fact is located right on the street where I was raised and where my parents lived until fairly recently—Francis Street in Kingston. They lived there for about 50 years. It's a one-level school and it's the perfect use for a property that was no longer needed for school purposes that has now been turned into a seniors' centre.

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I had the opportunity to be there with many other people, including the Honourable Flora MacDonald, who of course is well known in the Kingston area and who, as a matter of fact, was the official opener of the centre this past Friday. It is a centre that is being utilized to the fullest extent. When you look at all the activities that take place in that building—it has been open unofficially for about a year or so—it has just been amazing as to what that facility has done for our community. I would just like to pay tribute to them, because they certainly got together, they raised about \$800,000 over the last two years, and they built an absolutely exemplary senior citizens' centre.

Getting back to this particular issue, it's interesting how government members would like to portray this issue as if it is just a question of, "Are you against senior citizens getting money back from the government?" Of course the first thing you have to realize is that with the kind of rebate we're talking about here, we're looking at somewhere around \$450 million that will either come out of the public purse or will not be available for other much-needed programs.

It's our argument on this side of the House that, yes, we should do whatever we can for seniors, but we should be doing it for those seniors who need it, whose physical or financial economic circumstances dictate that something has to be done to help those individuals. As has already been mentioned earlier today in the debate, to give a tax credit to Ted Rogers of \$23,500, Ken Thomson of \$22,500, Peter Munk of another \$17,000 or \$18,000, Gordon Lightfoot of \$17,000, or Hal Jackman of \$15,000 is not the best way to spend taxpayers' money. Quite frankly, those people don't need it. If the government had really wanted to go along this route of giving people a rebate, then why didn't it simply use the Ontario property tax credit system that's already been in effect for, what, some 15 or 20 years? That is a system in which the people who have the least amount of taxable income annually get the greatest benefits. They could have easily topped up that particular program. If you earn money above a certain amount, and it's probably around \$50,000 or \$60,000 nowadays, you would not get anything under that property tax credit system. Why didn't they do that?

We all know why they didn't do that. They wanted to get some sort of a political advantage on the other parties. They wanted to, in effect, buy their votes in an indirect sort of way, or maybe in a very direct way. That's the only possible way to look at it. It's a very attractive

proposition to some seniors who, in the initial instance, may very well say, "My gosh, you know, if I live in a \$200,000-valued house and I'm going to get a \$700 cheque from the government or \$670, that's pretty attractive."

But I also know, in talking to an awful lot of senior citizens in my community over the last month or so, when you talk to them at any length and tell them that this money could be available for better nursing home care, to raise the individual standards for personal and nursing care in nursing homes so that we're no longer at the bottom of the heap, as we currently are, or if we could really build a good community care system whereby there's enough money in the system so that people can stay in their own homes as long as possible before they have to go into an institution such as a long-term-care facility or a home for the aged, the vast majority of seniors I've spoken to have said to me, "Look, that's where our priority should be."

That is the entire issue, as far as I'm concerned. It's a question of how you're going to spend \$450 million that the government is proposing to send out in cheques. How is that best spent for the senior citizens who need it the most? I maintain it's needed for those individuals who have either physical or mental ailments or economic problems or people who simply aren't as well off. It is not a program that should have just gone clear across the board, with those people who live in the more expensive homes gaining by far and away the most amount of money out of this system. By the way, the way the government has set up the system now, whereby in effect you have to apply for it and then you get a cheque back from the government—and I'm sure that will happen just before the next election; that's undoubtedly how it will happen—is going to cost the treasury, according to the *National Post*, \$15 million.

It's interesting. Last Wednesday, I was at the estimates committee and that same question was asked by both the member from Scarborough-Agincourt and myself of the Minister of Finance and the various officials as to how much it was going to cost, and they denied that there was going to be any cost to it at all. Basically they were involved in administering so many different programs that there were no extra costs involved in delivering or sending out almost a million cheques. Of course, nobody in the room there really believed it, but that's actually in Hansard.

Well, I guess the truth has come out now. According to this article that was in the paper today, it's going to cost \$15 million, and that makes sense. It's going to cost money to send cheques out from the government. It's only a minor matter. We're just wondering if that money is really being expended in the best possible fashion.

The letter that I found extremely interesting was one that was a release—I guess it wasn't a letter; yes, it's an open letter to Premier Ernie Eves that was released by CARP, the Canadian Association of Retired Persons. It's well known, and their magazine is well known in this province. Their response to the budget of March 28 was

kind of interesting. I'll just read most of the letter to you, because you would think this organization would be all in favour of the senior tax credit. But I'll just read this to you. It starts off by saying, "The budget announced yesterday is an insult to the intelligence and well-being of most Ontario seniors." Now, that is a very tough and hard-hitting statement for any organization to make. We get lots of news releases etc from all sorts of different organizations, but for one of the leading senior citizens' associations in this country to say that it's an insult to the intelligence and well-being of most Ontario seniors, I think, is a very condemning statement as far as how they feel about this government's activity.

It goes on to say, "How does this budget help the women we have heard from who are paying as much as 80% of their low annual income on rent?" I suppose the argument would be "Well, they'll get \$200 or \$300." That's what the argument from the government side would be, because there is also a rental component to this. They'd certainly be at the lower end of the scale.

It goes on further to say, "And those who have contacted us about their property taxes going through the roof because of current value assessment by well over the amount of the reimbursement being offered?"

"Or the thousands of family caregivers who had to leave work to provide home care for elderly, frail parents or spouses? Many of them have no income, are therefore not paying taxes and are, therefore, not eligible for a tax credit." Actually, I don't think that's 100% correct. Well, I guess they're not eligible for the tax credit that's based on the income tax system; that's correct.

The news release from CARP goes further to say, "As you can see, the budget actually raises a lot of questions when it comes to benefiting seniors."

"Moreover, where is the reference to Ottawa's new funding for affordable housing—or home and community care? Ontarians want to know how Queen's Park is spending this money."

"And, where is the reference to restoring promised, but frozen, money by Queen's Park for home and community care? Why is Queen's Park choosing to ignore the crisis facing home and community care services?"

"Tax credits do not benefit low- and fixed-income seniors and, in any case, do not provide a necessary cash flow to pay for essentials such as rent and food. Let's not forget the growing number of seniors going to food banks. Why is Queen's park ignoring poverty among seniors?"

"Reimbursements for education taxes are welcome, of course, but at what expense to younger Ontarians?..."

"Premier, CARP demands a meeting with you as soon as possible for clarification and discussion on how this budget" was put together, etc.

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I should say that CARP has over 400,000 members across the country, and its mission is to promote the rights and quality of life for mature Canadians. That was their take on the budget.

I find what followed after that even more interesting. This is a letter that was sent almost a month after this news release went out. It's another letter to the Premier, dated 17 April.

"Dear Premier:

"The members of the Ontario Home and Community Care Round Table, which represents 1,000,000 Ontarians, was surprised that Queen's Park ignored home and community care in its recent budgetary statement."

Now, first of all, I should tell you who this round table is. I'll just name all of the organizations, because this is a very formidable list. It is comprised of the Alzheimer Society of Ontario, Canadian Home Care Association, Canadian Pensioners Concerned, CareWatch Toronto, Community Care East York, Ontario Community Support Association, Communities for Home Health Care, Ontario Coalition of Senior Citizens Organizations, Ontario Federation of Union Retirees, Ontario Federation of Labour, Ontario Health Coalition, Older Women's Network, Ontario Home Health Care Providers' Association, Retired Teachers of Ontario, United Senior Citizens of Ontario, Volunteer Centre of Ontario, and the Victorian Order of Nurses.

They were all concerned that there was absolutely nothing in this budget dealing with where the real need is, and that's in more and greater provisions for home care.

What does this letter goes on to say? It states, "Home care was a key feature of the First Ministers' accord in February. And the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care highlighted it as its number one strategic priority. Yet there was no mention of this important health care sector in your budgetary statement."

"While we appreciate the health care initiatives in the budgetary statement to serve seniors ... you did not go far enough. A truly 'seniors budget' would have addressed the needs of home and community care in the continuum of health care in Ontario..."

It goes on to say, "When the government froze home and community care funding in 2001-02, it destabilized an already fragile system—with the results that"—just listen to this, and this is just in the province of Ontario:

"—More than 115,000 vulnerable seniors and persons with debilitating diseases have lost services completely."

In other words, these were people that used to get some kind of home care services and no longer get them at all, because there simply isn't enough money in the budgets that various community care access centres have available across the province.

"—The number of hours of service has declined by 30%." We've heard many stories, and I'm sure you have as well, of individuals that may have been able to get four to five hours a week and are now lucky if they get an hour or two per week.

"—Over six million hours of services for home-making, personal support, nursing and therapy services have been cut."

"—Community support agencies continue to struggle to meet the increasing demands of an aging population."

The point is quite simply this: this round table, representing all these different organizations, was pleading with the Premier some three or four weeks after the budget was delivered, "Please do something for the seniors that really need home care and personal care services."

I did an analysis as our party's long-term-care critic, and what's interesting is that the amount of money that is required to put the home care system into a position whereby most of the seniors in the province, such as these 115,000—and of course there could be many others that should have received services that aren't even included in this number, and also with what the associations that are involved in these services felt was necessary or felt had been committed to by this government in the past—and the amount of the shortfall that they came up with was \$227 million. It's kind of interesting. That's about half of the senior citizen tax credit. When you add the other \$200 million that it would take, according to the Ontario Long Term Care Association and the association for non-profit nursing homes in this province, there's about another \$225 million that they feel is required in order to take us from 10th place in the study that was done by Pricewaterhouse some two years ago, which the government funded and paid for. You may recall that in that study the number of nursing hours available for somebody in a nursing home was something like 2.24 hours and the average was something in the neighbourhood of 3.5 hours per day per senior in these homes. In order to accomplish that, it would take about another \$225 million.

The real issue is, is it better to spend the \$450 million and give it to all the seniors in this province, whether they need it or not, or is it better to take that \$450 million and say we are going to create the best home care system that's possible in this province, so that everyone can truly stay in their own home, regardless of whether they need home care because of a chronic care situation or because of a post-acute-care situation; we are going to spend that money on those seniors in their own homes?

What's happening right now, as we all know, is that even if you get home care, the maximum number of hours of home care you can possibly get is 60 hours per month. I can remember asking the Minister of Health at one of the estimates meetings, what happens if somebody needs 70 or 75 hours of care and they cannot pay for the additional 10 to 15 hours themselves? I was told in so many words, "Well, that's too bad." I guess that person, in effect, will end up in an institution. It never made any sense to me then and it still doesn't, because basically what we're saying is that in dollar terms the maximum amount of home care a person is entitled to is something around the range—and this is the absolute maximum; I'm not for a moment suggesting that everybody on home care gets this—of \$1,500 per month.

The interesting thing is that when somebody goes into an institution, they get about \$3,000 a month. It makes sense to me, from an economic viewpoint as well as from a personal satisfaction viewpoint, that you want that

senior to stay in their own home as long as possible. Why do we tell that senior, in effect, "If you need \$1,600 or \$1,700 worth of care, you have to go into an institution," which is going to cost the tax system more than if we were simply willing to top that up?

In our party platform we are saying, very simply, that if you need home care and you're eligible for the home care services that are going to be provided, then we as a society, as a government, are prepared to fund that up to the level it would cost for you to be maintained in a nursing home or long-term-care facility. That may not be the perfect system—there may still be some people who fall through the cracks—but it is much less likely to happen than it is right now. We've all heard horrendous stories of people being cut off and forced into long-term-care facilities, or they certainly get there a lot faster than should be the case.

One of the interesting things the Pricewaterhouse study that the government itself paid for a couple of years ago showed—and we don't hear much about that any more; you certainly never hear a government member talk about it—is a chart that was contained on one of the pages. It talked about the total number of nursing care hours that the average person receives in various states, provinces and other countries. For example, in Saskatchewan, the average senior in a nursing home gets 3.06 hours of care; in Maine, it's 4.4 hours; in Michigan, it's 3.4 hours. In Mississippi—do you know how we used to use Mississippi as sort of an example of the worst of the possible worst in a lot of different areas? Well, they're not, as far as long-term-care homes are concerned, because there a nursing home resident gets 4.2 hours of nursing care per day; South Dakota, three hours; the Netherlands, 3.3 hours. And what is it in Ontario? It's 2.04 hours. We rank absolutely last.

1950

I want to make it absolutely clear that this is not meant to be an attack on all of those people who are personal care workers, nurses and all the other health care workers who work in our long-term-care homes, because I can tell you they are probably some of the hardest-working people we have in the province of Ontario. They sometimes deal with very difficult situations, with people getting older and frailer and needing more and more care. It seems to me that the way we judge a society ultimately, or the way it is judged, is by how we take care of the most vulnerable in our society, and these people are vulnerable. Many of these people have absolutely no one else to care for them or look after them in any way, shape or form. And yet we are saying—and you may recall they're not even saying they're getting 2.24 hours of nursing care per day. You may recall that about a year or so ago, the government, by regulation, decided to do away with all the time restrictions and basically left it up to the good graces of the home to ensure that people were properly looked after. There's some very general language; the language escapes me right now. The argument was made on the government side, "By putting in 2.24 hours of nursing care per day, in effect that becomes the

standard, and by not having a standard at all, people will probably get more." The whole argument was a little ridiculous, as far as I'm concerned.

The point is simply this: with people being older in nursing homes, with people being frailer, with people having greater acuity problems than certainly was the case five or 10 years ago—every study indicates that, as a matter of fact—we need more people employed in the nursing homes and homes for the aged so that the people who reside there can be looked after in a proper way.

You may recall that there was a petition that was signed by over 55,000 residents in this province, mainly the residents themselves who live in these homes, or by their family members. Some 55,000 people said at the time, "You need to increase the nursing standards. We need to have greater investments in our nursing homes." The government turned that around initially—it was just about a year ago today—and they said, "Oh, I guess we need more money. Right. You're going to pay 15% more. We need another \$230 from you, residents." Many of these people, of course, have been retired 20 or 25 years, their pensions are about as low as you can get, and for them to come up with an extra \$230 per month was absolutely ludicrous. We started hearing not just from the residents but quite often from the family members, and that was kind of the interesting thing. It wasn't the residents who complained so much, but it was more the family members, people of my age who were saying, "My golly, is this what awaits us 20 or 25 years down the road?"

Now, give credit where credit is due. The government saw the evil of their own ways and they decided to take the 15% and initially spread it over three years. I guess now, because we're right before an election, they're saying, "OK. We're going to do the right thing. All you have to do is pay the cost of living more than last year. Forget about that." But you know, that's not the way you deal with people you truly respect, the kind of people who have made this province what it is today.

But just to deal with the issue as to how much personal care these individuals need—and these are just some facts and figures that people may be interested in—a classification study that was done by the ministry itself showed that of the residents in a typical long-term-care facility, 70% are over 80 and 25% are over 90. I can remember at Rideaucrest Home for the Aged, back some 25 years ago, the average age of the person who lived there was probably about 68 or 70. Now we're talking about something a heck of a lot closer to 90 years of age—95% of the people who live in these homes.

They used to be homes for the aged; they're no longer that. They are in effect the 21st-century equivalent of chronic care hospitals. Most of these people need help on a continual basis. About 95% require assistance to get dressed, 94% require some assistance to eat, 89% are incontinent and require bathroom assistance, 63% suffer from dementia, 44% are unable to find their own room and 35% have a neurological disorder. With the funding that was in place at the time this study was done, which

was only last year—and there is a bit more money in the system now; I realize that. The government did come up with \$100 million some time ago. But the funding that was available when this survey was taken only allowed, per resident, four minutes' assistance to get up, get washed, get dressed and go to the dining room, 10 minutes for assistance with eating and medicines, one bath per week, which we heard so much about over the last six or seven months, and 15 minutes of programming per day.

If you want to do something for senior citizens, surely you're going to spend the money on the people who truly need it. Surely you're going to spend it on seniors who either live in nursing homes, so that they can be provided with more personal care, or on individuals who need help in their own homes through community care access, through home care. That's the issue.

I could be talking about a whole bunch of other issues as well. For example, look at the question of dental hygiene. It's an issue that no longer even comes up in a nursing home, and yet it's a well-known fact that many diseases, particularly for the elderly, start with improper dental hygiene. Dental hygienists quite frankly are no longer to be found in most nursing homes because the money for them has dried up.

The same thing applies to physiotherapy. Why don't we increase the maximum that can be spent on physiotherapy, which, according to schedule 5, I think is \$44 million? Why don't we increase that? The more activity we give people in nursing homes, the better it is for their total health. Isn't that where the money should be spent?

I met with a group just a couple of weeks ago that were suffering from rheumatoid arthritis. I was just astounded by the amount of money each of these individuals has to spend, upwards of \$2,000 per month, just to find some relief from the constant aches and pains they suffer from. Many of these people can still get around, so we're not even talking about people who live in nursing homes or who need home care; we're talking about people who want to get around and be active but who are in pain most of the time, and it costs up to \$2,000 for them to get the proper medicines. Why aren't we doing something about that situation?

We've all heard about the Visudyne problem, where you basically have to be more than 50% blind, where 50% of your sight is gone, before the government program comes in to help, which to my way of thinking is ludicrous. We should be helping people with eyesight problems right from the beginning.

I want to leave enough time for my colleagues. There are so many other things I could say about this issue, but I want to make it absolutely clear to all seniors who are watching that we wish we could give everybody their money back. I even heard this argument from some younger people: "Well, if you're going to give money back to seniors because they're no longer using the schools, I don't use the health care system; aren't you going to give me a rebate?"; or "I don't have a car. Why the heck should I pay for the highways out there?" You can

take that argument further and do it with all sorts of other services that are out there.

2000

That is not what makes a community. What makes a community is the fact that we're in it together, and those individuals who need help, whether it's help with education programs or health care programs, are the individuals for whom we should be using our shared resources, our shared taxation dollars that come into the system.

We know the plan that's being proposed to us right now is a cynical ploy to curry favour with some seniors out there. Everybody loves a tax cut. I'd like a tax cut too. Who doesn't like a tax cut? The problem is, we can't afford it if we want to live in the society we have created here over the years.

I would simply end by saying this: if we are going to invest \$450 million, let's invest it in the right area. Let's make sure that we spend that money in both the nursing home sector, by providing greater support in personal care and nursing services, and in the community care access centres. That's where the money is required, much more than in the overall tax rebate system that's being proposed here.

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): I'll be the first to acknowledge that tax cuts are tempting. In fact, this government wants to tempt large, profitable corporations with tax cuts. They want to tempt them with \$2.2 billion worth of tax cuts. They want to tempt them to the point that our corporation taxes in this province would be 25% below the lowest-taxed state in the United States of America.

Interjection.

Mr Crozier: The minister claps, but that's a race for the bottom, Minister.

I believe we live in a caring society. For example, I agree with Ethel Meade, co-chairwoman of the Ontario Coalition of Senior Citizens' Organizations. She said the government is "very uneasy about getting elected again and they think they can appeal to seniors."

This goes on, "While the education property tax break will be attractive to people who have expensive properties, Ms Meade said, 'I find it offensive because to even suggest that seniors have no concern about education is off the wall.'" I agree with her. I think seniors in this province have the dignity to pay their way and contribute to society.

There are a lot of seniors in this province, I'm sure, who don't live in \$200,000 homes. You have to live in a \$200,000 home to get a tax credit of some \$670. There are a lot of seniors who live in housing that costs or is assessed at a lot less than that.

Speaker, you'll no doubt remember with me when then-Treasurer Ernie Eves—now Premier—under the former Premier, Mike Harris, gave out \$200 cheques just before Christmas a few years ago. Do you remember that? And do you remember also how those were scoffed at, saying that money would be much better spent on education, health care, long-term care for our seniors, and

the environment? In any number of ways it would be much better spent.

I think this is a case where rather than giving these tax rebates, mailing out these cheques to the rich in our society who are going to get the huge cheques that count, many seniors would agree that a better way to spend this is to spend it in those areas where our society is in true need.

In fact, Ethel Meade went on to say, "It is a public good that we want to contribute to," ... noting that the \$450 million in forgone tax revenue could also be used," besides on education, "to improve services in long-term-care facilities," as my colleague from Kingston and the Islands has pointed out.

"Those facilities have the lowest basic standards in the country, she said, pointing an accusing finger at the Tories for eliminating rules that at one time required facilities to have a registered nurse on duty at all times and mandated a minimum of one bath per week for residents."

I think the seniors in this province truly do want to continue to contribute to society. They have; they've worked hard, they've earned their retirement and they've earned retirement in comfort. But we have to understand where the priorities might be. I look at this act and I think of the seniors in our province who very well might have to hire an accountant in order to apply for the rebate, because to receive the payment of the tax credit for a year, the eligible senior must apply to the Minister of Finance for the credit "within two years after the end of the year ... or within such longer period as may be prescribed." What the government is saying is, "Look, we appreciate the fact that it may be difficult to understand how we're going to get this back," unlike the property tax credit that we have now that can simply be done through your income tax.

Again, it was pointed out earlier that this tax credit, this cheque scheme in itself is going to cost \$15 million. Fifteen million dollars is a lot of money; that goes a long way to educating our children and to taking care of our frail and elderly. Because in addition to the \$15 million to administer the rebate, the government also is planning an extensive summer advertising blitz advising all seniors how to obtain and complete the application form. I seem to recall that this was the government that wanted to get rid of red tape. And what are they doing? They're creating massive red tape, in that seniors are going to have to apply, somebody is going to have to handle that application form, somebody is then going to have to make out another form so the cheque can be sent off to somebody—a massive administration expense that really isn't necessary.

If the government really, truly wanted to get bang for its buck, they would make this as simple as could be. In fact, they'd almost make it automatic. But they're not doing that. Oh no, you're going to have to apply for it. You know what happens when there's a requirement that you have to apply for this rebate? They're counting on a number of seniors in this province who won't even know

about it, who won't know how to apply, who won't understand how they apply. That way, the government says, we're helping all these seniors in the province. There will be a significant number of them who won't even know that they have to apply for this.

I want to refer to a couple of other things in the act that are of interest, because it goes to the motive behind this. For example, there's a minimum amount. "If an eligible senior's tax credit for a year, as otherwise calculated under this section, is greater than nil but less than \$10, the amount payable as his or her tax credit for the year is \$10." You know what tells me too? That they expect there's going to be an awful lot of seniors in this province who aren't even going to be eligible for more than 10 bucks or they wouldn't have even had to put that in there. I suspect that the government knows how many are not even going to be eligible for 10 bucks. It's going to cost more than 10 bucks to get their 10 bucks to them. It doesn't make sense. This is the government that wanted to get rid of red tape and it's going to cost them more money to write the cheque than the cheque is going to be worth.

2010

There are also restrictions, Minister—or Speaker; that's a Freudian slip. "The minister is not required to pay the amount of an eligible senior's tax credit for a year until the minister has received proof, satisfactory to the minister, that the home property tax, rent or other amount in respect of which the tax credit was calculated has been paid." Can you imagine how many bureaucrats are going to have to be involved to determine that every one of these applications has in fact been paid for? I can't imagine how much bureaucratic red tape this is going to cost. I think the \$15-million estimate is far lower than it really should be.

Estimated payments: "The minister may make one or more payments based on an estimate of an eligible senior's tax credit for a year from the consolidated revenue fund if, in the minister's opinion, such conditions as may be prescribed by regulation are satisfied." Can you believe it?

Now we've got another group of, I guess, bureaucratic staff who are going to have to determine whether these payments should be made or whether they should estimate what payment is to be made. It's hard to believe that the government that wanted to take care of all the red tape in this province is setting up a bureaucratic nightmare like this.

Another part of the act that you probably won't hear many of the government members speak about is the minister's right of set-off. "Despite subsection (1)"—whatever that is; I guess that's where you're entitled to this tax rebate—"if an eligible senior who is entitled to a tax credit under this act is liable or is about to become liable to make a payment to the crown in right of Ontario, the minister may apply all or part of the tax credit, including any interest, to reduce the liability, instead of paying it to the eligible senior." Can you believe that?

One thing is that if you owe the government money, they'll keep it. That may be fair. But this says you might even become liable to make a payment to the crown. Who's going to decide that? How's a senior going to understand how somebody decided I might become liable to pay money to the crown? Absolutely ridiculous.

Now we get to the part of the act where the municipalities become involved. Not only is this government going to restrict the ability of municipalities to raise money, by having to have referenda, which this provincial government doesn't require—and when they did require referenda to increase tax, do you know what they did? They just changed the law. That's easy for these guys to do.

It's the same for municipalities. It says, "For the purposes of administering and enforcing this act, the minister may require a municipality to give such information as the minister considers necessary and the municipality shall do so." OK, municipalities, get ready, because these guys are going to foist a lot of this administrative cost on to you: another download. What do they do? They restrict your ability to raise the funds to pay for the download. It's absolutely ridiculous.

It goes into some areas too of privatization, where the government can practically walk into your home and ask for your tax return. Obviously it has to be during certain hours of the day.

I want to conclude with this to folks listening at home, and I want the seniors to listen to this. It's very simple:

"(a) a property tax credit equal to the sum of,

"(i) the lesser of \$500 and the amount calculated using the formula,

"A - B

"in which,

"A' is the senior's occupancy cost for the taxation year, and

"B' is the lesser of the amount, if any, received by the senior under the Ontario Home Property Tax Relief for Seniors Act, 2003 for the taxation year and the amount determined in accordance with the regulations, and

"(ii) the amount calculated using the formula,

"(A - B) × 10%

"in which 'A' and 'B' have the meaning assigned in subclause (i)...."

The bottom line is, I'm going to be a senior in the not-too-distant future. I'm proud to pay for the education of Joan's and my granddaughter, and I think there are lots of seniors in this province who are quite proud to continue to play that role as well.

Mr Sergio: Before I dwell on Bill 43, I would like to put in a plug for one of our own agencies with respect to the Ontario strategy to combat elder abuse, June being Seniors' Month. Seniors are prime targets for scam artists. So much has been said with respect to putting our seniors on guard with respect to elder abuse from scams. But there are still some 60,000 to 150,000 seniors who suffer the consequences.

We may say, "What is elder abuse?" Let me say, especially for the seniors in my area—and I have a very large

seniors' population—that there is recourse, so there should be no seniors who take those abuses and do not report them. Elder abuse is most often defined as an act that harms a senior or jeopardizes his or her health or welfare. Elder abuse can take the form of financial, emotional or physical abuse or neglect. Financial abuse is by far the most common form of elder abuse, followed by emotional and physical abuse and neglect. Elder abuse can take place in the home, in a residential setting or in the community. As I said, it is estimated that between 60,000 and 150,000 Ontario seniors suffer the consequences of elder abuse.

Now let me dwell for a few minutes on Bill 43, which is the much-talked-about property tax rebate for seniors. Let me present a day in the life of my seniors. And if my seniors are like your seniors, then I think we share some common feelings my seniors go through, day in and day out. Who are the seniors in my area? There are those who barely receive the old age pension and Canada pension. There are some who don't get even that, because they were prior to one of the pensions becoming law. That is the only income they receive on a monthly basis.

Who are the seniors talked about so much? Even today we had the Premier lauding the war veterans and survivors, those that gave us freedom, and so forth. But generally, who are our seniors? As I said, if your seniors are like mine, they come from working in the most menial jobs over the past 30, 40 or 50 years. They have done every possible job from construction of sewers and building roads and railways to the asphalt business. That generation is practically gone. That is why we are suffering the consequences today; we don't have those people any more.

Those people have either retired or are collecting a very measly Workers' Compensation Board pension, on which, I should say to the government, they have not received one cent of increase in the last 10 years. I say shame on the government, because the injured workers in Ontario should at minimum be getting their pension combined to the cost of living increases. But they are not. They are still getting the original pension, and, in the last 10 years, they did not receive even a 1% increase.

2020

The seniors I quoted, day in and day out, get up and, if they can, they will walk to the nearest mall for a walk, if the day is nice; otherwise, they will go to the local community centre when it's open. Do you know what they do in there? They walk in circles. Usually there is a club or two for seniors, which charges something like \$10 to \$15 a year, and 90% of those seniors don't belong because they can't afford that. If they are lucky, at the community centre maybe there is some—what do we call them?—bocce playing, a kind of lawn bowling. They can't afford the \$10 membership fee.

I'm speaking of those seniors who don't take one holiday a year or one every two years. They've never been on a holiday. They don't know what it is. I'm talking about those seniors who barely can afford to pay their utility expenses on a monthly basis, if they want to

continue to live in their little home. Most likely, seniors in my area have a semi-detached. That is their castle. They worked all their lives for that and now they feel threatened that they can't afford it any more. Those who still can afford it, have a 10- to 12-year-old car. God forbid a major repair—they dread that happening. The majority of our seniors in my area don't have a car any more. Do you know why? They can't afford the insurance rates any more. They can't afford a car; they can't afford the insurance payments.

That's what we should tell the government here, not the \$20 a month that they may possibly get, let alone the rich people they say will be getting \$10,000, \$12,000, \$15,000 a month because their homes are worth millions of dollars. But if the government really wanted to take into consideration seniors, they would have addressed the seniors of a certain lower income, on fixed incomes, and they would have given a reasonable rebate specifically to address those in need.

On top of that, we are trying to address this \$200 a year. When we say, "We're going to give you a tax rebate," seniors in general say, "Oh, goody, goody. I'm going to get lots of money." Well, don't expect a lot of money. There isn't a lot of money because they don't pay a lot of education tax on their property. So what are they going to get from this government?

Shamefully, since 1995 seniors have been the group most hit, and hit hard, by the government. So they say, "Do you know what? We'll take whatever, but why don't they remove maybe the \$6 copayment on drugs or the first \$100 on drugs? Or instead of penalizing me every year because I don't go on a holiday, I just keep my house nice and clean; I plant some flowers, I keep some hedges"—then, do you know what? The MPAC agency of the municipality, comes and says, "Your house looks nice and clean. It's worth more money," so the taxes go up. They can't win. So we are penalizing those seniors who can't afford to go on a holiday. They can't afford to go to a movie once a month, and we are saying, "Your house looks very nice. It's worth more than your neighbour's," let's say. And they say, "What? What are you talking about? This is what I spend my time on, day in and day out. I look after my front and back yard to make it look nice for the neighbourhood, and you come and penalize me because I improved my house and my neighbourhood?"

Then at the end, when we have those in real need and they can't find any more assistance in their own house and have to go to long-term care or a nursing home, oh my, it's no longer fun. That's the time when the government should be saying, "Do you know what? This is the time when you deserve to be looked after, and looked after properly." It is a shame that now the government refuses to accommodate those people in need, either because of funding or because of accommodation. They are no longer providing any more rooms. They are no longer providing more money to give that assistance. They closed hospitals and they said they were going to create community care access centres, but the community

care access centres say, "Do you know what? They only give us so much money, and once the money is gone, sorry, we can't provide you any more hours per week. So what are we supposed to do?" We are supposed to be the ones that have the answers, and we say, "Well, the government has decided to fund only so much and then, if there is more need, sorry." "Are you saying that I am entitled to only one bath a week?" "Yes." "One hour a week?" "Yes."

Is this the type of care that at this particular time we want to give our seniors? Surely not. I am sure that every member on the government side feels the same way, but because of who they are and because of their—

Mr Gerretsen: What they are.

Mr Sergio: Yes, what they are. This is what they are doing to our most needy group in our community, our seniors.

So we say we'd love to give our seniors a hand up, a tax break, a reduction in their taxes, but not in this particular way. When I say to seniors, "We're going to give you a \$100 reduction, but we're going to take it from your grandson's or granddaughter's education," because that's where it's going to be coming from, they say, "Oh, no, no. I don't want my granddaughter or grandson to be working the sewers and in construction like I did. I want them to have an education." That's what it boils down to. It is a choice, and this government is not giving our seniors a choice. It's giving them what they want to feed to our seniors. I don't think that is acceptable to me, and I don't think it's acceptable to our seniors.

The Acting Speaker: Members now have up to two minutes for questions or comments.

Ms Martel: It's worth reiterating again that there is already an existing tax credit for seniors who need property tax relief, because if you listened to the government members tonight, you would think that there's nothing in place. There already is an existing tax credit. It has a cap on it to ensure that the money goes to those seniors who need it the most, not to millionaires. The scheme that the government proposes will now take the cap off in terms of qualification, so a number of wealthy seniors, who have already been mentioned tonight and whom my colleague from Toronto-Danforth is going to mention again, are now going to get taxpayers' dollars to pay their property taxes. That is wrong.

If the government really wanted to help vulnerable seniors, I'll give you an idea of what the government could do. This government could ensure that seniors and the disabled who are serviced now by the Manitoulin-Sudbury CCAC get the homemaking services they need.

I see the minister is here tonight, and I want to know what he is going to do for some of my constituents; first of all, for the mother of Gloria Rohrbacher of Capreol. Her mom lives in Val Caron. She's 85 years old, with congestive heart failure. The measly 1.5 hours of home-making that she was receiving from the CCAC is now being cut off, and she can't afford to pay for it privately.

Carmelle Pelletier of Capreol was getting three hours one week and 1.45 hours every second week of home-

making care. They would come in, deal with her bedding, her floors, her bathrooms and do the housekeeping that she needed. The CCAC is going to continue her personal care but cut off everything else. She makes \$10,000 a year. She can't afford private housekeeping.

Paulette Ross of Val Caron uses a wheelchair. She's going to get her homemaking cut off—the laundry, the vacuuming and washing of the floors that was done. She's on ODSP and can't afford it either.

If you've got money for \$450 million for a tax credit that's going to benefit the wealthy, what about helping these seniors who need homemaking care?

2030

Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington): I listened with interest for the entire debate from the members for Kingston and the Islands, Essex and York West. What I found fascinating about their presentations this evening is that not once did they mention what they were prepared to do, should they become government, to help seniors in this province. But if you listen carefully to what they did say, it's clear there are a few decisions they've already made about what they would do.

The first is, they would roll back and cancel this tax rebate system which is before the House this evening. That's \$450 million in the pockets of seniors that the Liberals would take out of their pockets.

Then they've said they would roll back the 20% personal income tax reduction on top of the previous 20% personal tax cut that was brought in by our government over the last eight and a half years. That amounts to close to \$1,000 per year per the average senior in this province. That is what the Liberals would do. And did we hear any of their promises? No, because, not just in the election that Lyn McLeod lost or the last election that Dalton McGuinty lost, there was virtually nothing in their platforms to discuss what they would do for seniors.

Home care: they said they'd study it. Long-term-care beds: no, we don't need any. When they were the government for five years, they didn't build one single long-term-care bed in this province and left it to this government to clean up the \$10-billion overexpenditure of the previous government, and yet we still committed to expanding services for seniors.

The truth is that the Liberals are going to take out of the pockets of Ontarians \$4.2 billion because Liberals, true to their heritage, know how to spend their money. Always trust a Liberal to find a way into your pocket and spend it on your behalf. The truth is that the citizens of Ontario should be spending their own hard-earned money, and we're going to let them do it.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: There was something unparliamentary said here. I heard it very clearly and I would ask you to take it back, please, member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr Gerretsen: I withdraw.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): I sat and listened very carefully to the mem-

bers from Kingston and the Islands, Essex and York West. I was touched with the sincerity of their sharing. It was clearly the voice of three very caring and compassionate people who understand that politics, when all is said and done, is about making choices. Martin Luther King said that. Politics is about making choices, about how we distribute good services and opportunities.

We have a whole different set of values when it comes to choices over here and a whole different set of priorities.

I don't know what planet the member from Burlington was from as he was listening to the speeches. He was certainly listening to something very different from what I heard. I heard some genuine caring and compassion coming from the members on this side of the House, who made more sense in their brief moments this evening than members opposite have made in some time when it comes to the issue of seniors.

When the honourable member opposite talks about not knowing what we're going to do, I thought the members here made it very clear: more emphasis on home care; greater investment to make sure nurses are there at 3 am when that bell sounds, that there's actually somebody there to respond; home care standards that make sense; and, together, standing up and trying to build a stronger, more caring and compassionate community, the kind of community the senior citizens I've been privileged to be influenced by, the kinds of values they passed on to a generation of people, many of whom are in this House and want to build that stronger community.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): The question we have to be asking ourselves tonight—and this has been pointed out by the member for Nickel Belt and others—is, do Ted Rogers and his wife, Loretta, need to see another \$23,000 in their pocket back from the public purse? Do media tycoon Ken Thomson and Barrick Gold founder and chairman Peter Munk need to see another \$22,500 less in property taxes out of the public purse? Does Hal Jackman need to get another \$15,000 or so back, with his millions of dollars? Does Gordon Lightfoot need to get \$17,000 back on his \$4-million Toronto home?

Speaking of Gordon Lightfoot, I do want to take this opportunity to wish him well. I'm a great fan of Gordon Lightfoot. He's a great Canadian, a great singer, a great songwriter, and we were all very worried when he went into hospital and became ill. I only met Mr Lightfoot once, and I'm sure he wouldn't remember me, but I remember him. I would be surprised if he supported this, because he's a man who just went through a very serious illness and was in the hospital and was taken care of by very good nurses and doctors and other caregivers who went through our very fine education system.

That's an example right there of why we should all be helping pay for our education system, because we all end up as patients at some time or other and need these well-educated people taking care of us. We all have grandchildren. If you don't, you probably will. I'm a proud grandmother, and I want to be able to contribute to my

three grandchildren's education. That's James, Savanna and Kerin, for the record. It's my responsibility to make sure that they are good citizens and they get a good education.

The Acting Speaker: Now one of the two original debaters may respond. I see the member for Kingston and the Islands on his feet. You now have the floor.

Mr Gerretsen: I would like to first of all thank all the members for their responses and my two colleagues for being involved in the presentation tonight. I say to the member from Burlington, who was here during the entire hour that the three of us took, that I thought I made it quite clear, that I talked about the people of Ontario and the government having choices. Your choice is apparently to give \$450 million back in tax rebates, with most of it going to the people who really don't need the money. Our choice is to take that \$450 million and to put \$225 million of that into home care, where it's much needed. We all know of services that have been cut, and we all know of organizations that have literally had to shut down—in Hamilton during the summer last summer, the VON in Kingston and in other places as well—because home care is no longer available through those services.

The other \$225 million will go to be spent on the 60,000 Ontarians who currently live in nursing homes, in homes for the aged and in other for-profit nursing homes out there right now. That's our priority. Our priority is to spend it on the seniors who need the services and not on the individuals who don't need it. Would we like to give a tax rebate to everyone? Obviously. But it seems clear to us that if we really want to build the compassionate society that we have traditionally had in this province, it's absolutely necessary that we make those kinds of investments in home care and in the nursing homes of this province.

The Acting Speaker: The floor is now open for further debate.

Mr Jackson: I am pleased to be able to rise this evening and speak on Bill 43, Ontario's home property tax relief for seniors. As has been relayed earlier, June is Seniors' Month, and just this last week, of course, and today in the House we acknowledged the efforts of veterans and their performance in the European campaign to liberate Europe. So this is a very significant month and a significant time of the year for us to be discussing a very important issue, and that is how the government encourages seniors to live with dignity and comfort in their elder years.

Much has been said in this debate so far this evening. My colleague the member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex did an excellent job setting out all the fine points that are contained within this legislation.

2040

I want to cover a couple of new areas that have not been discussed so far in this debate. I'm going to hearken back to two experiences. One involves my mother, because it will be 24 years this September that my father passed away. My mother had two of my eight brothers and sisters still living at home. My dad died passed away

without insurance, without a whole lot. I remember him telling me just before he left that he hadn't really prepared our mother to become a widow. I was in public office at that time but not here at Queen's Park, obviously.

I realized just how vulnerable seniors can become, not through any singular effort or failure on their own part, and that all of us in this House have a responsibility to try to better understand the seniors' value system, to listen to them to determine what constitutes, for them, independence. A lot of that has to do with where they live, whether they can still drive a car, and so and so forth, and a lot has to do with whether they can interact with the rest of their family members to determine their quality of life.

I feel very strongly about this bill. Many of the seniors in this province are living alone, unfortunately, because they are widows or widowers. Many want to continue to maintain their home, not just because it's their home but because it's surrounded by memories, it's surrounded by their friends and neighbours, and also because it gives them a sense of independence.

When I go back 27 years ago, when I was first elected as a school trustee, at the first door I knocked on—and I'll never forget it because it was the first door I knocked on—was a senior citizen who said, "Cam, I don't know why you're wasting your time trying to talk to me about being a trustee on the school board. Those individuals spend my money like drunken sailors—my taxes are going up way too much for education—and not at the city and not at the region. So why are you wasting your time standing on my doorway? Nobody ever considers us when they're spending our money. My kids haven't been in school for 35 years and I continue to pay."

This government understood that and did a series of reforms that, in effect, put a cap on the ability of trustees to spend. It didn't put a cap on what we transfer to school boards, as has already been alluded to. We're paying more today than we have ever in the history of the province: \$15.3 billion. That doesn't even include the \$1 billion-plus we put into the teachers' pension fund on behalf of all taxpayers in the province. The fact of the matter is that many seniors question why their property taxes have been going up.

It's interesting that two out of the three Liberal speakers are persons who held public office on the municipal side. They remember those years when the education portion went up 14%, the city or county would go up at 4%, they'd have to bring in a blended tax increase of 7.5%, and the mayor or the reeve would take all the heat in the community, when in fact it was the education portion that was rising—in the wake of declining enrolments.

We made a promise and we kept that promise, that we would not only make sure that the education portion of your taxes got under control, but we also said, "We want to take this form of a wealth tax off the property." We did so and we did so successfully. Now we're honouring part

of that commitment which was to reduce more of the education portion. It shouldn't be based on a wealth tax.

Ms Churley is in the House today. She will remember when Toronto received not a single penny of provincial tax revenue because it had this hugely rich assessment in Toronto to fund its educational system. It was hardly fair to communities all across Ontario that didn't have that rich assessment base or all these people paying property taxes upon which to draw.

Today we have a standard funding model that allows for equity across the entire province. The province makes that commitment from its income taxes, its corporate taxes, its gasoline taxes and so on, not off its property tax.

One of the reasons I like this piece of legislation is that it acknowledges that seniors want to stay in their homes and live there independently. You can't punish a senior because their life's investment is locked up in their home, and yet they are so-called cash-poor but home-rich. The only way we can allow them to continue to live there is if we have some system of deferral or rebate for their property taxes, and this legislation achieves that.

That's why I'm pleased to support it. There are so many seniors who will benefit from this. I listened carefully to the Liberals as they commented earlier today, and I'm very concerned for seniors in the province if they ever get elected. I'm concerned because of their past record, whether it was on rent control, with their RCCI-BOCI formula that saw some buildings, predominantly seniors' buildings in my riding of Burlington, with rent increases of 35% and 40%—the NDP had to come in and clean that up—or to see them promise 140 new chronic care beds in our community, only to have 75 cut. The only government to cut hospital beds in my community was the Liberal government.

Interjection.

Mr Jackson: Across the province, it was more in the order of 4,500, but in my own community, they promised more beds and then took our existing ones away.

I'm very concerned for seniors as to what this so-called Liberal government-in-waiting says they will do. I've alluded to it earlier. They're going to roll back the 20% personal income tax cut and the further 20% that we're committed to implementing right away. We know that 90,000 seniors in this province pay federal income taxes but no provincial taxes. That is a result of the work of this government. So they're going to roll that back so that people like my mother are going to have to pay more on their meagre incomes, because my father had a veteran's pension but no other pension income, and that's what my mother has to live on, that and her Canada pension. She has a very difficult time. Now the Liberals are proposing to not only take away this tax credit on their property but also to add to their income taxes. Those are just two of the taxes they're purporting to roll back that will adversely affect seniors in this province.

I want to dispel the notion that some people are conveying, that somehow there's going to be less money spent on education. This is an absolute fallacy, and it's

inappropriate to even suggest it. The commitment from the government is consistent. It has been pledged that we will continue to increase money for our publicly funded school systems, and we're doing that on target with the Rozanski report.

On health care—I wish I had a few more minutes, but I wanted to comment—tonight we've heard a lot of discussion about home care and long-term care. I reiterate, regardless of what the member for Kingston and the Islands says he'd like to spend the money on, the truth is that the Liberals have not pledged to do anything other than what we've already done this year, which is to pay the cost-of-living increase for nursing homes. They're dead silent, other than setting standards, but they're not prepared to increase funding for home care, and not once in the debate did they comment on the fact that these are health care programs that are not covered under the Canada Health Act. When Paul Martin Sr brought in the Canada Health Act, he was dead silent on the needs of seniors: no national drug plan, no national home care plan and no national nursing home plan. All three have been promised by three different budgets of the federal Liberal government, and we've received nothing. We've heard nothing from the Liberals about how we should go and get those monies for seniors in Ontario from the Canada Health Act. It's time seniors were recognized by the federal government.

Mr Crozier: I really find it strange that the member from Burlington would venture into the land of spending like drunken sailors. We know, for example, that this government spends \$75,000 an hour, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year on consultants. We know that they've spent somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$500 million on self-serving advertising. And he talks about somebody spending like a drunken sailor? You've got to be kidding.

2050

We also are concerned about our senior citizens. We just see it a different way. He talked about somebody being house-rich and tax-poor, or something like that. As I said earlier, out where I come from, there aren't a lot of senior citizens who live in \$200,000 homes; they live in very modest accommodations. I say to the member, that's why I brought up the fact that there are a lot of seniors out there—maybe not all of them; I don't know which group you're appealing to—who still feel a social conscience and want to contribute to other areas of society, ie the education of their grandchildren or the health care of their fellow citizens. I don't think it's fair to paint them all with the same brush.

He mentioned that we, as Liberals, are going to roll back the personal income tax credit. I don't think so. Corporation tax, \$2.5 billion in corporation tax? Absolutely.

Ms Churley: I must agree with the member from Burlington that the Liberals do continually promise to spend the money that they're going to claw back, money that the Tories put out there on their promises, but, as in

this case, the money hasn't been spent yet. I acknowledge that that's an issue.

Mr Speaker, I don't know how you feel—you're in the chair; you have to be neutral tonight—but I've got to tell you that I find this debate really sad, really depressing, frankly, that we're standing here in different parties using seniors as a political football before an election. I find it really distressing, because we all know it's a hot-button issue. I can guarantee you, with an election coming, that we're going to get ready for those ads over the summer, and get ready for the cheques to start flowing, because the complicated way the government plans to do this is not through filling in a form in your income tax, but it's through filling in an application form—there are some whose first language is not English and some others may not even fill it in—that gets to the government so they can send that cheque individually to each senior. Now, you tell me what this is really all about. That's why I find it so distressing.

Look, I want to say directly to the member from Burlington that this isn't about his mother. There is already, and read my lips, a seniors' tax credit which has an income cap that makes it possible for those on lower incomes who need the help to get it. If we need to improve on that, let's improve on it for those who need it. But please, don't stand there and give me this, that rich seniors in this province need this kind of break at this time when our education system is screaming for more money.

Mr Wettlaufer: I want to comment on the member from Burlington. I have heard him speak many times about a number of issues, and he is always very dedicated to those issues. But I don't think I've ever heard him speaking so passionately about anything except when he is speaking about seniors.

He was the minister for seniors, as we all know in this House. I had a couple of seniors' seminars in my riding at which he spoke. I have to tell you, nobody in this House can claim to care more about seniors than he does.

What he says is the absolute truth. We're talking about seniors, not just the few whom the members opposite like to quote, who may benefit to a great extent from the seniors' tax credit, but the vast majority of seniors who are in the lower-income realm, the low-middle-income realm, who own houses. The member from Essex said they don't have \$200,000 homes in his riding. Well, in my riding, that's the average cost of a home. For a senior, that's a rather substantial investment.

But we're also talking about seniors who rent, and \$475 or \$575 or \$1,000—whatever—does help them immeasurably in the cost of their rent.

For those who happen to own a \$180,000 or \$200,000 house, their taxes are probably in the area of \$2,000 to \$3,000 a year, and now the members opposite want them to pay all the taxes. They don't want them to have any break at all from the provincial government, even though they know that money is not coming out of the education system but we are in fact putting it back in.

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): I rise to comment briefly on what the member from Burlington said. I don't doubt his sincerity at all, but government is all about making the right choice. Government is all about looking at a situation and ensuring that there is balance and fairness.

I guess this is where this Bill 43 is flawed. How can you possibly think that it's fair for Ted Rogers to receive approximately an additional \$18,000 a year in a tax rebate when you have somebody like Pat Jones, Pauline Ross, Marion Doyon and Don McLeod having their homemaking services cut off? These people are not going to be able to stay in their homes. These people are not going to be able to enjoy their quality of life any longer, as limited as it is right now, because this government chooses to provide a tax rebate to the wealthiest in the province. Meanwhile, they choose also, at the same time, to cut homemaking services to these people who require these services, who need these services, who must have these services in order to remain a bit independent.

The Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care is here this evening. He received a letter from me today asking him to come to Sudbury to explain to these four people, plus the many other cases we received over the weekend, to justify what you are doing to these people who require homemaking services, and then maybe the member from Burlington can stand up and say, "You're right; we've re-evaluated. These people need these services."

Ms Churley: It's almost 9 o'clock.

The Acting Speaker: Yeah, wouldn't you like that? Actually, where we are is that the member for Burlington now has two minutes to respond to the comments that were made.

Mr Jackson: I appreciate the comments of all members who have responded. I am a little concerned at the comment made by the member for Essex about expenses in his cat-calling across the House. I should put on the record for him, as well, some of the issues around the expenses which were never really put on the public record as they should have been.

He might be pleased to know that if he was referring to expenses for MPPs, for example, for their accommodation and transportation back and forth to Toronto, a look at the local Hamilton-Burlington area is quite enlightening. It would appear that if you analyzed my last eight years here, my expenses are \$366 a month for my accommodation and transportation. The Liberal member for Hamilton Mountain's are \$1,310. Next on the list is the NDP member for Hamilton West, and his are \$1,462 a month. Then, of course, the expenses of our learned friend from Hamilton East are \$1,546 a month of taxpayers' money. But the absolute winner, the absolute spending giant for MPP expenses in our region, is a fellow who shares part of the responsibility to represent the good city of Burlington, Mr McMeekin, the member for Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot. He has himself a lovely, well-appointed apartment at \$14,276 a month and, frankly, when you look at his expenses, they

are \$1,654 a month for transportation. Those are the records of the expenditures of the MPPs in our area. I think the member opposite would be wise to reconsider when he raises the issue of expenditures again.

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Ms Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): From a policy perspective, I have to say that most people who are Conservatives and have been long-time Conservatives have been very clear over the last several weeks that they think the government is crazy to go down this road. Let's just speak about what we're hearing from long-time Conservatives—never mind what Liberals are going to say; you're going to expect that the Liberals are going to be opposed to this bill, which we are.

I want to speak from a personal perspective: seniors from Windsor West and issues that I've been dealing with as the representative there for the last eight years. When I talk to seniors and they call my office, they talk about one number-one issue repeatedly, and that's health care. You have a track record of what you have done to seniors over the last eight years that is appalling.

Maclean's came out with another list today. They came out to talk about where Windsor was ranked in terms of our health services. It's appalling. I have to say that across the province we don't have a city anywhere that has fewer doctors than we do. What is the number-one issue for seniors regularly? It's health care and can they access it. The Maclean's study today itemized wait times for things like hip surgery and knee replacements and all of those things. I have people in my riding who are bedridden; they're having difficulty walking. Do you know what we have to do? We have to organize to try to get them to London to get in to get their operations done. When we speak with the London hospital to say, "Could you tell us why they are waiting a year just for the consultation, never mind the intervention that may happen a year later?" they say, "We don't have room."

Never in Ontario's history have we had more hospitals with the level of debt that they have today. Deficits annually are \$1.4 billion across the province in all our hospitals. That is appalling, and the government continues to attend ribbon-cutting ceremonies and whatever for all of this capital expansion. People where I come from figure they'd like to get treated in a barn if only they had the staff to do it for them. We have fewer nurses than anywhere in Canada, except for the province of British Columbia. That is appalling in the most populous province in the nation.

We have nurses who are working part-time, as we've realized with the SARS. Our goal will be to have 70% of our nurses working full time, because today 50% are working part-time and jumping from place to place in order to get a full-time, secure pay.

We've got lots of problems with our seniors. We had this big glowing announcement about having the drug available for macular degeneration, only to find out that our seniors have to be half blind before they qualify for the drug. We've got people in nursing homes and their families who call us about the condition and the care. I

remember asking the minister in this House how many baths he takes a week, because we know the standards are just not there in our nursing homes. The government eliminated nursing standards in our nursing homes and comes up with every excuse in the world why that's OK.

I want to talk about the dignity that our seniors ought to be living with, which they don't have today. You tell me how this bill is going to improve their lot in life, because it won't. This is not the bill that's going to help the majority of seniors who really need government help. This is a pittance compared to what our system has to fund to make services available for our seniors that they need at this time.

Can you actually imagine a government creating a policy that says only those people who need the services are going to pay for them? I guess only families who have kids in the school system are going to be forced to pay for education. Seniors who built the nation understood long before we ever got to this chamber that education is the cornerstone of a successful country, a successful province and that we're all prepared to invest in it. What is around the corner? Every couple out there who has no children won't have to pay education taxes, because somehow we're not responsible for the education of our country's young people? That is appalling to think a government would try to advance that kind of policy. Moreover, the seniors I speak to are very interested in the fact that our young people will be educated well and that the best thing you could do for our kids is put them in smaller classes so they could have more attention.

So here we are tonight debating this minuscule, which is what it will be for most seniors, to get some pittance of a rebate on property tax, something you've had eight long years to bring in if you truly believed it, and only now on the cusp of an election do you throw this out like pap for the seniors.

A couple of weeks ago, I had a call about a little boy. This little guy is really struggling right now in his school. The teacher keeps having to send him to the principal, and under the new school disciplinary act, the Safe Schools Act, he keeps getting thrown out of school. The kid is seven years old and he's really struggling. He keeps getting sent home because there's no one to help him in that classroom. That kid doesn't have a teacher's assistant; the funding is just not there.

In the same week that we were dealing with this single mom who has to work full-time and doesn't know what to do when they're going to send the kid home because the kid is acting out in the classroom and being very disruptive and really needs attention, I get an e-mail from a mom whose daughter is afraid to go to school because there's a young boy in that same class who keeps having these outbursts and is quite violent. The mom says, "I don't know what to do. I want my daughter in school, but I don't want her to be afraid. I'm afraid for my child's safety, because there isn't enough assistance in that classroom to help this boy who truly needs help."

These are the kinds of issues that all of us should be coming together on to say, "How do we get enough

assistance in that classroom to help these young kids thrive?" Instead, you're prepared to take this amount of money and feed it out there like pap to our seniors and say, "Here. Thanks a bunch for your assistance."

Are you going to tell young people that they don't have to pay as much tax because they don't use the health system? So you get the seniors to pay for health costs because they use it, but the seniors don't have to pay for education because they don't use it. This is craziness. This is craziness. Don't take it from me; take it from long-time political observers who have watched the system who say this is wrong.

This isn't what we believe in. The government is supposed to be there for us. We collect the taxes, and based on who wins the election, we deliver it. We deliver it in a manner that we think our population needs and wants. So when we talked to people and said to seniors, "What's your number-one issue," they said, "It's health care." That's what they said in my riding. I said we have to commit to making those hip replacements happen faster.

I've got somebody who lives on my street. We couldn't get her in to see a neurosurgeon. The daughter brought the mom to the appointment, and the people behind the desk said, "You don't have an appointment today." "Yes, I do. Here's the card for the appointment." The appointment was for the next year on that same day. We managed to get this woman in for consultation in Detroit. She ended up having consultation and surgery, and today is walking around my block twice a day every day. That woman would have been bedridden had we not been able to make that happen. Our health system was not prepared to help this woman. So here's a woman who's benefited from our health system but has also contributed all along.

I say that's the kind of policies I want to see from this government. That's the kind of policies that Dalton McGuinty is going to bring into this Parliament. We're going to have a health system that does focus on home care. This government will say anything they want people to believe. They talked about tax cuts the last time they went to the polls. But when it came and the rubber hit the road, what they did was bring in a new law that broke the old law because they couldn't meet their pledge to give the tax cuts that government was promising. When I see key Conservative spokespeople talking about looking for and seeing a \$2-billion deficit on the books today, where will the government come up with the money it's promising, because it will cost hundreds of millions of dollars.

When I put the question to seniors: "Do you want good health care from this government, or do you want this measly rebate," almost without fail people are telling me, "Make sure I have a health system that will be there for me. Make sure I have the hip replacement when I need it and that I stay in my home."

To hear a former minister responsible for seniors in the House tonight talk about keeping seniors in their homes—they could have a fabulous home and a fabulous rebate of their property tax, but they want to stay in their

home if they have a little bit of help. Unfortunately, today we've got community care access centres that are cutting homemaking services right across the board in that community. How will these people stay in their own homes? At this point, they certainly wouldn't have the finances. What do you expect them to do? Hire private nurses to take care of them to keep them in their home, or bring in private people to make them meals because the government doesn't support them any more? We'll put those questions to the electorate if this government has the nerve to actually call an election.

On the basis of policy alone, what do we owe our seniors? We owe it to them to take care of them in nursing homes and introduce standards and actually fund for proper, nutritional meals, for example, so that we have dieticians who work with our seniors and see that they're eating properly. We want to see hospitals properly funded so they can take care of our old people. That's what we're committed to, and I hope the rest of the province will agree with us.

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The Acting Speaker: Members now have up to two minutes for questions and comments.

Ms Churley: Mr Speaker, it being almost 9:30 of the clock—just kidding; we have a few more minutes.

The member for Windsor West made some very good points about this being a slippery slope that we're on here. This pre-election bribe, this desperate pre-election bribe by this government because they're down in the polls, means we're starting to go down this very slippery slope. I think we all agree, and I've said before, and my colleagues have said, around this whole issue, that we all support help and tax breaks for low- and middle-income seniors. In fact, there is such an existing system. They should get that help, and they need it.

But the last thing we need is this kind of special break for all seniors from paying their portion of the education tax. It is a vital service that contributes to our society for all time. I can't say it nearly as well as Bill Davis recently did, the former Conservative Premier of this province who spent many years of his life building the public education system in this province. He is described as having a tear in his eye as he talked, for the first time publicly, about the demise of our public education system under this government, a Conservative government, and how sad it is for him to see that happen.

We need everybody contributing to our education system. It benefits us all in the immediate time frame and down the road. The slippery slope we're on here now with this pre-election bribe is just plain dumb and plain wrong. Of course, they have the numbers to push it through, and I wish they would reconsider.

Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South): I think it's unfortunate that the member for Toronto-Danforth, who is a long-time member in this House and has the experience to know better, talks about bribes in this place. I would like her to know, and I would like anyone who is watching to know, that there are two things about this government: one, we are not desperate,

and two, we have never entered into bribes because, frankly, that's not something our government has never needed to do. I'm not suggesting that other governments have done it either, and that's why I take exception to the use of that language.

When we talk about this education tax credit for seniors, we're talking about something that we talked about on the Peel district public school board in 1974, when I first started in politics as a trustee. There was always the question about who paid for the education of our students. Do you know what? It gets to a point of, how long are we going to ask seniors to pay for a public education system. Some of them pay very heavily through their income tax anyway.

But the point is that when this member talks about Premier Bill Davis building the education system to what it is, until he left in 1984, it's absolutely true, as did Premier Robarts before him. It was Premier Robarts who brought us the community colleges. We do have that history in Ontario, and I'm very proud of the history of our government and the Progressive Conservative Party in Ontario.

Mr Crozier: The member for Windsor West has pointed out, rightly so, that this whole tax scheme is tied into the education taxes that our seniors pay. The name of Bill Davis has been mentioned a couple of times here and I too want to refer to what he has said.

Mr Wettlaufer: All of what he said?

Mr Crozier: I don't have time in a minute and a half. He reminded his audience that everyone will pay a price down the road if we shortchange young people's education. So I will refer to the fact that speaks of people of his generation who are in the age group of seniors.

An editorial in the Toronto Star said: "Many who grew up in the Davis era are standing by silently as schools deteriorate, government policy encourages families to desert the public system and post-secondary education grows beyond the financial means of students."

The member for Mississauga said, "How long must seniors go on to pay?" I suggest to you that seniors benefit from the young people who are educated in our system. As they grow older they benefit, perhaps, even more. Bill Davis said, "Show me a good doctor, a good lawyer, a good whatever and I'll show you a good kindergarten teacher, a good high school teacher and a good university professor." We all continue to benefit from this education system, no matter what our age.

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): I'm a senior and I'm very proud of it, to be very honest with you.

I heard the member from Windsor West suggest that all the high-profile Conservatives in her area are very upset about this; in my area it tends to be a little bit different. Many of the key Liberals are suggesting that this is a not bad way to go, that it will definitely stimulate the economy because some of those seniors will have more money.

One of things that concerned me is that she made a comment about doctor shortages. The funny part of it is that if the Peterson government and the Rae government

had prepared for doctor shortages, which were in existence then, we would not have had the problem. I constantly listen to this election issue. I don't know, maybe I'm the only one in this House that doesn't know—is there an election being called? I don't think there is. I don't think this is an election issue. When the members of the opposition turn this thing into an election issue, when they turn against seniors, they are against everything. You guys have never voted for anything in this House. You were even against sending kids back to school last week. I cannot understand when you believe more in the OSSTF and the Catholic teachers' organization than you do in kids. No wonder some of the key Liberals are coming over to our side. I am ashamed to listen to you suggesting that the doctor shortage has happened only in the last five years; it hasn't. You know it, and it's about time you admitted it.

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Ms Pupatello: Let me reiterate that as far as public policy is concerned, all those who watch politics and governments of every political stripe suggest that this is crazy. It's crazy to suggest that a select group of people ought not to pay for the system from which all of us in the community benefit. It is a fundamental principle behind how government works. It would be like saying that seniors are going to be the only ones to pay for health care because they are the largest users. That is crazy talk, it is crazy policy and we should just not go down that road. We felt the same way when the government introduced user fees across the board, because they become prohibitive and only the select few who can afford it get to take advantage of it.

There are serious shortages of physicians across the board: in Peterborough, in Wawa, in Windsor. No matter where you go, most of Ontario is now underserved. The reality is that up until this point the government could blame every other government that came before it. This government has been here for eight years. We could have graduated doctors in these last eight years. We could have graduated the numbers that we needed. The government failed to do so.

The government has never been elected for its health care platform, so you can't stand up in the House today and pretend for a moment that you're going to go to the people with your track record in health care. There is overwhelming evidence that your restructuring program that you started has been an abject failure. You have woefully underestimated capital expenses, which is why you have to turn to the private sector. You've woefully underestimated diagnostic services, so you turn to the private sector.

Seniors in my riding, if they've got the thousands of dollars to pay for services—welcome to the new Ontario. I will be going door to door to suggest that you'll only do it to get elected, because you can't deliver.

Ms Churley: I had a couple of moments earlier this evening to give my position on this issue before us tonight. As I said, I see this as a pre-election bribe to get people to vote for the Tories in the next election, because

they're down in the polls. You can imagine them all huddled in the backrooms. "What are we going to do? Which target group are we going to after to get our numbers up enough so that we can win the next election?" It is so cynical. It is so transparent. I find it rather sickening.

I mentioned before that the existing seniors' tax credit had an income cap that made sure it got to the people who needed it most. We all agree in this Legislature that if that is not adequate—I would say that, under the existing government for the past eight years, especially for seniors on fixed incomes, it has become harder and harder for them to pay the bills every month.

I see in my constituency office, on a fairly regular basis, since this government got rid of rent control, situations where a senior—I shouldn't mention her name because she didn't give me permission; she may allow me to do so—as an example, a very elderly lady who had lived for over 20, maybe over 30, years in the same high-rise apartment building in my riding. She had all of her furniture from when she was a young woman crammed into that apartment—a two-bedroom apartment, I believe. Her husband died, and around the same time her rent went up quite a lot. She could no longer afford to live in that apartment. She was offered a bachelor that she might be able to afford to pay the rent on, but it meant that she had to give up all of her possessions at this age of her life—all those things that meant so much to her. Some of those possessions had extreme sentimental value; some were very useful. She didn't want to move. As it turned out, she couldn't afford that apartment either on her lower income. She came to me for help. I said, "I will see what I can do to help find you an adequate seniors' apartment in seniors' public housing." Of course, when I looked around Toronto and in the area where she wanted to stay—because she wasn't all that mobile any more and she didn't want to lose her friends. She didn't have a car and didn't drive—there was nothing available. She was stuck. I don't really know what happened to her ultimately because I walked that line as far as I could to try to help her and I reached a dead end because the safety nets that used to be there are no longer there. This government stopped building affordable housing completely, so the list for people waiting for seniors' apartments has gone through the roof. It's years of waiting. That's just one example of the kinds of constituents I see in my office who are really quite desperate.

There are other situations where many of these seniors only have enough money to pay the rent but they have no money for food and, in some cases, no money for telephones or transportation any more. They're going to the food banks. They are very embarrassed by this. Many of those people would not ask for help if they lay dying. They're too proud. They feel that they've given to this society, and now, in their last years, this is the kind of payback they get.

This is not going to help those people. This is going to predominantly help the millionaires we mentioned earlier, like Ted Rogers, Ken Thomson and Peter Munk—a gift of \$18,000 each—and this is on top of the tax breaks

they've received over the years from this government since they first took office in 1995. They're going to get another big gift back now.

I would say to the government, as I said earlier, this is the wrong way to go. Why don't we all sit down and figure out what seniors most need? We hear about a lot of things in this Legislature. I want to talk about home care for a moment, because that's a very vital service that keeps many of these seniors in their homes. Increasingly, we're seeing that these seniors can't stay in their homes because their home care has been cut.

The government members like to get up and talk and razz, I believe, both opposition parties and say, "When you were in government you didn't build one more long-term-care bed," or whatever. I remember what we did when we were in government and I also remember the Tories, then sitting right here as the third party, on their feet day after day giving us heck for spending money in times of a recession. One of the things that I'm proud of, although it didn't help us with the electorate, and I understand that—we got booted out; it was like a depression—is that we continued to spend money to try to keep the most vulnerable in our society afloat. We didn't borrow money, as these guys did, to give tax cuts to the wealthy. I don't know if people out there realize that even in good economic times, they had to borrow money to give those tax cuts. We borrowed money to help seniors and we focused our attention on home care.

Mr Wettlaufer: We didn't borrow any money. Revenues increased.

Ms Churley: Ah, still at it. Revenues were starting to increase before you guys got into government. That's the reality, and you knew it.

We decided, as a government, despite the recession, to spend money on home care because we knew that that's where the services were sadly lacking. It doesn't mean that we didn't need more long-term-care beds—we did then and we still do—but we looked at the pitiful state of the services in home care and realized that that's where we had to invest our money. We made huge investments in that area and I'm proud of it.

When this government came to power, though, what has happened is that they've been increasingly cutting back on those home care funds over the years. It's pretty distressing when you now see vulnerable people. The member for Nickel Belt has been pointing out repeatedly—tonight, and she asked a question about it—elderly people in her riding—and she named names; she told us who they are—who depend on this meagre amount of home care to stay in their homes, and that home care has

been cut off and they're not going to get it. What's going to happen to those people? I guess some of them are going to end up in those acute care beds or long-term-care beds, if they're available, which ultimately cost the taxpayer more money down the road and, frankly, are not the best solutions for many people who want to stay in their own homes.

The government is coming at this from the wrong end, if I may say so. You're looking at this as purely, "What do we have to do to get re-elected?" We've seen from some of the other election platform promises that were made that the government has decided to target seniors, and to try to paint both of the opposition parties as being against seniors. That is what I find so terribly distressing, disgusting, sad and depressing.

As I said earlier, we're standing here and debating this public policy that I think is the wrong choice and is going to cause all kinds of problems down the road for our education system, which is already in dire straits. It's just going to make it worse. So I would say, once again, that we should not be giving thousands of dollars back to very wealthy people—albeit they're seniors, but they've got a lot of money already. I would think they'd be happy to continue contributing that amount of money, those thousands of dollars—which is not a lot when you've got a \$3-million or \$4-million home and annual incomes of multi-millions of dollars—to do their particular piece to make sure that our education system remains strong.

When the government gets up and says that it is the fault of the opposition for not supporting this and that we don't care about seniors, I think the seniors see through that; I really do. They understand what the government is doing and they also understand that the services that they need are not coming forth under this government.

So I would say to the government that you should listen to what the opposition is saying on this one, and you should listen to what a lot of other critics, including some very right-wing journalists and critics, are saying about this particular policy, which is just the wrong direction to be taking us in.

Now I can say quite legitimately, Mr Speaker, that it being 9:30 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow.

The Acting Speaker: Just for the technical aspect, I'll say it, but I understand your point.

It is now after 9:30 of the clock, and you are correct: this House does stand adjourned until 1:30 tomorrow afternoon.

The House adjourned at 2132.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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		York West / -Ouest	Sergio, Mario (L)
		Mississauga West / -Ouest	Vacant

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Fourth Session, 37th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Quatrième session, 37^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Tuesday 10 June 2003

Mardi 10 juin 2003



Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 10 June 2003

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 10 juin 2003

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

NORTHERN HEALTH SERVICES

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): The fact that the Tories don't give two hoots about northern health care has reared its ugly head once again, this time in a survey compiled by the Canadian Institute for Health Information. Of the 57 communities surveyed across Canada, northern Ontario communities ranked almost at the very last. Thunder Bay ranked 48th out of 57, Sudbury and the Soo ranked 52nd and the ex-Premier's own riding of North Bay-Huntsville ranked 55th. When you think about this, the one area that ranks the worst in health care across Canada is northern Ontario.

The reason for this lies across the way. Like anything, if you neglect, if you fail to nurture and support, if you don't care, things go by the wayside and everyone suffers the consequences. Since 1995, the northern Liberal caucus has urged the Harris-Eves government to put more money into health care in northern Ontario. Our protestations manifest themselves today in this poor ranking of northern Ontario health care across Canada.

I tell this government: start putting the necessary resources into health care in northern Ontario. Try to make a difference before you're voted out of office.

MATTAWA VOYAGEUR DAYS

Mr AL McDonald (Nipissing): I'd like to personally invite everyone to Mattawa Voyageur Days, July 24 through 27. The town of Mattawa is located about 45 minutes east of North Bay on the beautiful Mattawa River. This festival has so much to offer everyone—all family members—including the Voyageur's Marketplace, the Haunted House at Champlain Park, the new Royal Ontario Museum Dinomobile, Survivor Kidz, dam tours, golf tournaments, Fun in the Sun, Eau Claire Gorge guided hiking tours, an antique vehicle show, a kids' fishing derby, treasure hunting, a reptile show, a North Bay to Mattawa canoe race and a 100-kilometre "Lost in the Rocks and Trees" mountain bike enduro race.

You can see there's lots here to do, and awesome entertainment, including the Ennis Sisters; Trooper;

Charlie Major; La Franco, with Chuck Labelle and Robert Paquette; children's entertainer Fred Penner; and many, many more for the entire family. You can have all this. For the low price of \$20, you can buy your wristbands.

I want to congratulate Mayor Dean Backer, Jacques Begin, the committee and all the volunteers who make this festival such a great attraction to Nipissing region.

For all those here and those watching on TV, you can get further information at www.voyageurdays.com or phone the Mattawa information centre at 1-800-267-4222.

PETROCHEMICAL INDUSTRY

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): On April 14, 2003, a major power failure impacted the petrochemical industry in Sarnia-Lambton. Four major refineries had to go on a code 8, all of Sarnia-Lambton was under a "take shelter" call, and the whole area was blanketed with a toxic cloud due to the power failure.

Yesterday, June 9, 2003, there was yet another power failure that forced the shutdown of Imperial Oil, Dow, Bayer, and Nova. Again, code 8s were sounded, and although the power outage was restored within 20 minutes, it took hours for the plants to be up and running again. Millions of dollars are lost and, more importantly, the dangerous consequence of an environmental disaster can become a reality.

What is concerning about these power failures is that they haven't been seen before in the area, according to officials and long-time residents, and are rare occurrences, according to a Hydro One spokesperson. In just two months we have had two major incidents of power failure. The minister should be well aware of the importance of the power supply to the petrochemical industry. This industry is the largest user of electricity in the province. Because of this government's track record on electricity, my biggest concern is reliability. I have requested a detailed report on this matter from the minister and will be watching carefully as to what steps will be taken to ensure that the power supply is reliable to the petrochemical industry in Sarnia-Lambton.

BSE

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): Three weeks ago, Canadian farmers and the Canadian public were shocked to hear that a case of mad cow disease had been found in Alberta. Almost instantly, the United States

closed its borders to Canadian beef and cattle, with many of our other trading partners following suit.

Since then, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency has been tracing the history of the infected cow and quarantining any herds with which it may have had contact. Cattle from many of these herds have been tested and, so far, all the tests have come back negative. So far, the initial case is the only diseased animal. This investigation began immediately after the case of mad cow disease was discovered and appears to have been very thorough. I want to thank all the employees of the CFIA, who have been working overtime to demonstrate that Canadian beef is safe for our consumption and for export to the United States and elsewhere.

I particularly want to make mention of Stratford veterinarian Dr Tom Cox, who has travelled to Alberta to assist in this investigation. Dr Cox works for the CFIA in Woodstock and he, along with 13 other Ontario employees of the CFIA, has been working on this investigation in western Canada. I'm sure that all members here join me in lending our support and encouragement to Dr Cox and his colleagues at the CFIA.

NEW BRUNSWICK ELECTION

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale):

It was in New Brunswick last night that exciting things happened. In one fell swoop, the people of New Brunswick took the Tory wonder kid from hero to zero. Just months ago, we heard that Bernard Lord was the next Prime Minister of Canada and last night, and maybe in recounts yet to come, he will be a former Premier, because only 109 votes, at the last count, separated his party from defeat and the Liberal Party from majority government in the province of New Brunswick.

Why? Because the government of New Brunswick has been carrying on in the same way as the government of Ontario with respect to the issue of automobile insurance. While the Minister of Finance, talks and talks and talks, regulations long overdue fail to be brought forward. Seven years and a few days to the anniversary of that government's rate stabilization for auto insurance legislation, the residents of Ontario are suffering through massive increases in their insurance—19.2% was the average rate of insurance increase in the last quarter alone. When we ask the government for action what do we hear? That they are out doing focus groups around their proposed regulations in the hope that they can find some way to hang the responsibility on some party other than themselves.

We know this won't work, because we know the Minister of Finance, who is here with us today, has no attention span for the matter of auto insurance and no interest in protecting consumers against what they've been experiencing. We call again on the government to act in this most highly regulated sector to protect consumers.

1340

TORONTO CITY SUMMIT ALLIANCE

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): This past week, literally hundreds of people attended the Toronto City Summit Alliance: hundreds of people from business, from academia, from social work, from politics, from labour; hundreds of people committed to reversing the downward spiral that has become Toronto today. As a result of the twin demons of amalgamation and downloading, the city of Toronto is not one of the world's great cities any more. But those hundreds of people gathered, trying to find a way out, a way that the city of Toronto can properly finance itself.

They discussed a gas tax, a hotel tax, land transfer taxes, GST rebates and toll roads. They discussed many things that would be necessary for the city of Toronto to right itself in this period of downturn, and all they got from this government was non-commitment—some would even say hostility—from Minister Flaherty.

There were some bright spots, of course. Former Tories Mr Crombie and Mr Davis—and I say “former” because they appear to have moved quite a way from this particular party—had some very exciting things to say. Overall, though, everyone came to the same conclusion; that is, this government's time is up, and Torontonians who love this city, including David Pecaut, know that the first change for the better for the people of Toronto will be a change of government.

ANDRÉ MAK

Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South): It gives me great pleasure to congratulate André Mak as the recipient of the 2003 Mississauga Citizen of the Year Award.

Applause.

Mrs Marland: Thank you. This prestigious honour is a fitting tribute to André's remarkable volunteer efforts. His many accomplishments have also been recognized with the Ontario Medal for Good Citizenship and the Mississauga Civic Award of Recognition.

Since immigrating to Canada in 1969, André Mak has devoted a great deal of his personal time and talent to the Chinese business community and to the broader communities of Mississauga and Toronto. A co-founder, with Dr Joseph Wong, of the Mississauga Board of Chinese Professionals and Businesses, André Mak has been at the head of many successful fundraising campaigns. Many institutions and local community groups have benefited immeasurably from André's incredible work ethic and his gentle, compassionate personality.

André is also very successful in the world of business. He has a printing company where he works with his wife, Teresa. They are the loving and proud parents of three wonderful and talented adult children—Patricia, Lawrence, and Benjamin—who are following in the steps of their successful and generous parents.

André, on behalf of all the residents of the city of Mississauga and the members of this Legislature, thank you for your dedication and hard work. You are an example to all of us of the power of voluntarism to make our community a better place, and we are very proud of you.

PORTUGUESE CANADIAN COMMUNITY

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): On behalf of Dalton McGuinty and the Liberal caucus, I rise for the purpose of recognizing an important day in the history of mankind, Portuguese national day.

The celebration of the national day of Portugal is special and unique in the pages of history. Unlike some of the dates that commemorate an important political event, such as a declaration of independence, on this historic occasion we ask the people of Ontario to join our Canadians of Portuguese heritage in the remembrance of a great, world-renowned poet and writer, Luis de Camões. Although he passed away more than 400 years ago, Camões left a living legacy of meaningful poetry of immortal beauty that has not withered with age.

Especially those of you who participated in this great Portuguese national day and its parade just a few days ago were mostly impressed with the energy and the vitality of this great community, which has made a tremendous contribution to the lives of every Ontarian and of every Canadian.

I had the pleasure to sit next to our leader, Dalton McGuinty, and he said to me, "Look at these people. Look at the contribution. Look at the wonderful floats. Look at the energy that pulses throughout this parade." We're delighted to stand here today and recognize their event.

Finally, let me simply say in Portuguese:
Remarks in Portuguese.

TOBERMORY CHI-CHEEMAUN FESTIVAL

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): I rise in the House today to let everyone know about an upcoming event in my riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. On June 19 to June 22, Tobermory will be celebrating its 29th annual Chi-Cheemaun Festival. It is organized by the Tobermory Chi-Cheemaun Festival Committee in conjunction with the Tobermory Firefighters Association. It includes the efforts and hard work of a group of people in the area who dedicate countless hours of their time to help make this event memorable.

I encourage all members in this House to gather their family and friends and partake in this annual occasion. It promises to be a fun-filled weekend for everyone. Enjoy the many events scheduled, such as fireworks displays, the silent auction, and the antique and classic car show. Also included are the Olde Tyme Jamboree, various kids'

events, the dunk tank and the firefighters' pancake breakfast.

Interjections.

Mr Murdoch: Along with numerous volunteers who make this possible, a big "thank you" also goes to the Owen Sound Transportation Co, the Rotary Club of Tobermory, and the many local businesses who donate financially and the various items to the silent auction. They truly make this a community-based event. The money raised over the weekend is used for community projects such as school trips, Chi-Cheemaun Cub Scouts, Tobermory Place Daycare, and a new soccer program after school.

I wish to thank all the volunteers and the community of Tobermory for another successful Chi-Cheemaun Festival.

VISITORS

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to welcome Adam Dafallah, who is a rising young star with the New York Sun and former president of the Ontario PC Campus Association, right here in the gallery.

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would be remiss if I didn't draw the members' attention to the presence of my uncle, Doug Wood, in the members' gallery.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): We welcome our guests.

Just before the member for Mississauga South, joining us in the Speaker's gallery is Mr Frank Bonello, who is in charge of central scouting for the National Hockey League. I have warned Frank, who has seen many, many hockey games, that question period may be a little bit worse than even some of the worst hockey games that he has seen in his career.

Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I just wondered why today there was so much heckling of my revered friend from the county of Grey—

Interjections.

Mrs Marland: No, it's very hard on him. You have no idea. I think all those interjections—I could hardly hear what he was saying. We don't usually do it during members' statements, I ask with respect.

The Speaker: I thank the member for her help.

1350

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

PREVENTING PARTISAN ADVERTISING ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 VISANT À EMPÊCHER LA PUBLICITÉ À CARACTÈRE POLITIQUE

Mr Bradley moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 91, An Act to end government spending on partisan advertising / Projet de loi 91, Loi mettant fin aux dépenses du gouvernement en matière de publicité à caractère politique.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

The member for St Catharines.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): You would like the explanation now?

The bill establishes standards for government advertising, including that it be in the public interest and be non-partisan. A member of cabinet may ask the Provincial Auditor of Ontario to decide if specified government advertising meets the standards before the advertising is made public.

A member of the assembly may make a complaint to the auditor that specified government advertising does not meet the standards. If the auditor decides after a complaint that specified government advertising does not meet the specified standards, the governing party may be ordered to reimburse the crown for the cost of advertising.

The bill requires the auditor to report annually to the Speaker of the assembly on government advertising.

CELEBRATION OF HELLENIC HERITAGE ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 SUR LA FÊTE DU PATRIMOINE HELLÉNIQUE

Mrs Bountrogianni moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 92, An Act to proclaim a day and a month to celebrate Hellenic heritage in Ontario / Projet de loi 92, Loi proclamant un jour et un mois de fête du patrimoine hellénique en Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain): The Hellenes, the Greeks of today, are the proud descendants of a culture that originated in the glorious civilization of ancient Hellas. Many of the ideas, ideals and institutions upon which modern civilization is based, such as freedom and democracy, were first developed by the ancient Greeks.

The month of March and the day of March 25, in particular, have traditionally been a great time of celebration by the Greek community. March 25 commemorates the anniversary of the commencement of the Greek War of Independence that resulted in the birth of the modern Greek state.

TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE PRACTITIONERS, TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE HERBALISTS AND ACUPUNCTURISTS ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 SUR LES PRATICIENS DE MÉDECINE CHINOISE TRADITIONNELLE, LES HERBORISTES DE MÉDECINE CHINOISE TRADITIONNELLE ET LES ACUPUNCTEURS

Mr Colle moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 93, An Act to regulate practitioners of traditional Chinese medicine, herbalists in the practice of traditional Chinese medicine and acupuncturists / Projet de loi 93, Loi réglementant les praticiens de médecine chinoise traditionnelle, les herboristes praticiens de médecine chinoise traditionnelle et les acupuncteurs.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for a short statement?

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): This bill, if passed, would help ensure that only well-trained and qualified practitioners of traditional Chinese medicine and acupuncturists can practise in Ontario. At present, anybody can claim to be an acupuncturist, without any regulation. This would enhance the safety of the public and, at the same time, establish high standards of care and training for practitioners of this 5,000-year-old successful alternative medical practice.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

PORTUGUESE CANADIAN COMMUNITY

Hon Carl DeFaria (Minister of Citizenship, minister responsible for seniors): I am delighted to declare that today, June 10, is Portugal Day. It is my great pleasure to join all Ontarians in celebrating the second official Portuguese History and Heritage Month in Ontario. This is our opportunity to acknowledge the contributions that Canadians of Portuguese background have made to this province.

In June 2002, our government took the initiative to recognize the first official Portuguese History and Heritage Month in Ontario. This month, and particularly Portugal Day, allows us the opportunity to give special recognition to the rich heritage, history and accomplishments of the Portuguese people.

This is a particularly personal celebration for me, for, as my colleagues know, I came to Canada from Portugal as a young man.

I am proud to call Ontario my home. I have raised my family here, established my career, and have been honoured to serve the residents of Mississauga East as their member of provincial Parliament since 1995.

As Ontario's Minister of Citizenship and as an immigrant to this great province, I know how important it is to value one's heritage and one's cultural roots. I also know how important it is that we all reach out and share that heritage and culture to build understanding and acceptance among all Ontarians.

This year, Portuguese History and Heritage Month is a particularly special one because this is the 50th anniversary of the start of Portuguese immigration in large numbers to Canada. In the 1950s, the Portuguese arrived in Canada in large numbers, mainly from the Azores and in particular from the island of San Miguel. The initial settlement of the Portuguese in Toronto began in Kensington Market and Alexandra Park, neighbourhoods immediately west of the downtown core.

By 1991, most Portuguese in central Toronto lived in a tightly defined cluster comprising social, cultural and religious institutions, as well as the two most important Portuguese commercial strips along Dundas and College Streets. The Portuguese community has expanded from its original location. The Portuguese community in Mississauga has grown considerably in recent years. In northern Ontario, Portuguese newcomers can be found in Sudbury, Sault Ste Marie and Thunder Bay. West of Toronto, the communities of Kitchener, Cambridge, London, Leamington, Chatham and Sarnia are home to significant Portuguese populations.

The history, culture and traditions of the Portuguese people, however, have enriched Canada for more than 500 years. It was Gaspar Corte Real who arrived at the coast of Newfoundland and Labrador in the 1500s. With all deference to my colleagues here, there is a saying from a Portuguese writer, "An ocean with an end will be Greek or Roman, but an ocean without an end is Portuguese."

Portuguese Canadians have played a pioneering role in many facets of today's society. When mail service was first established in Canada in 1693, it was a Portuguese man, Pedro da Silva, who transported and delivered mail by canoe between Montreal and Quebec City. The government of Canada has acknowledged that this year by issuing a stamp that shows that Pedro da Silva was the first mail service in Canada. It was Portuguese fishermen who began cod fishing off the coast of Newfoundland and Labrador in 1504.

The Portuguese community is an integral piece of the cultural mosaic that makes our Canada so vital and wonderful. It is important to celebrate the significant cultural and historical heritage of this vibrant community. Their rich heritage underlines the wealth of ethnic diversity that lends to Ontario's economic and cultural strength. Our government supports Portuguese History and Heritage Month as a way to highlight and commemorate these accomplishments.

Today I was joined by members of the Portuguese community to raise a flag outside this Legislature officially recognizing Portugal Day, and I had the opportunity to have a lot of my colleagues with us. We had a reception here, and I'd like to acknowledge Angela

Murdoch, the daughter of Bill Murdoch, our colleague here, who performed the capoeira dance at our event. I wish to indicate my appreciation for her performance.

I ask all members of this Legislature to continue celebrating the Portuguese History and Heritage Month in Ontario in their communities. To all of them, and I want them all to join me in saying, "Viva Portugal, viva Canada."

1400

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Ministerial statements? Seeing none, responses?

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): On behalf of Dalton McGuinty and my colleagues, I am delighted to respond to the statement on Portuguese national day.

Today we had over 1,000 persons of Portuguese-Canadian background helping us to raise the flag. I only want to say at the beginning that, unfortunately, none of them are here. They were here half an hour ago. A thousand people were here. I would have expected that this minister would have asked them to be here to listen to the statement he made. He's saying that he's proud of his background, he's proud of their contribution, he's proud of all Portuguese-Canadians, but yet, we don't see them in the Legislature sharing this pride. I would hope that next time he will invite them here to listen to him.

When we raise this flag, we are also conscious of the contributions Portuguese-Canadians have made. They came, indeed, from all over Ontario. They came from important cities, such as Kingston and Ottawa—

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain): Hamilton.

Mr Ruprecht: —and Hamilton, Burlington, and Mississauga. They came from as far away as Cambridge, Thunder Bay, London, Leamington, Chatham, Sarnia, Kitchener, Sudbury, and on and on we could go.

There are literally thousands of Canadians of Portuguese background who have made a tremendous contribution in all of our cities across Ontario. When we saw the flag go up today and we saw their faces, especially when their national anthem was sung right here in this Legislature, I observed one person as tears came streaming down their cheeks because of their condition that they thought they were here in Canada being grateful Canadians and having contributed so much.

Today, while we celebrate this national day, we're also very mindful of Portuguese children. What are they celebrating today? They are celebrating not only an important day in the history of Canada and Portugal but they're also celebrating a great, renowned poet. This man, Camões, has left a living legacy and, from ocean to ocean, left wonderful poetry that these children are commemorating today.

As we celebrate this day, we're also reminded of Canada's own artistic communities, of our own poets and our own writers. I hope that his living legacy will also leave a remnant to Canadians, because Canadians too will be inspired by Luis de Camões as he left his living legacy for Canadians of Portuguese background as well.

The clubs that we saw participating in the great parade that was over a mile and a half long, that lasted over two hours, made a tremendous contribution as well, and here they are—I'm just going to read some of them: Amor de Pátria Community Centre; Arco-iris, the association from Toronto; Arsenal do Minho, Asas do Atlântico, Association 25 de Abril, Association Cultural do Minho, Migrante de Barcelos, Comões Soccer Club, Casa Cultural Vila do Conde, Casa da Madeira, Casa das Beiras, Casa do Alentejo, Casa do Benfica. All these clubs and their floats and their contributions to this parade goes beyond the parade. Indeed, it goes beyond not only this parade but beyond access to trades and professions because it is these very people who deserve to have access to trades and professions if they are going to make a contribution in the future.

Let me continue: Casa dos Poveiros, Portuguese Club of Mississauga, Santa Clara Cultural de Toronto, Connections Soccer Club, the First Portuguese Club of Canada, Futebol Clube do Porto, Escola Portuguesa do Clube Transmontano, the Kitchener Portuguese Club, Liga da Amizade, the Northern Portugal Club, Operário Sports Club, the Oshawa Portuguese Club, the Peniche Community Club, the Portugal 2004 Soccer Club, the Portuguese-Canadian democratic association, the Portuguese United Soccer Club, Tricanas, Ethnográfico de Portugal, Rancho Folclórico, Províncias e Ilhas de Portugal, Sociedade dos Deficientes Portugal, Sport Clube Angrense, Sport Clube Lusitânia, and on and on it goes. We are proud in this Legislature that we have so many Portuguese Canadians making such a tremendous contribution.

Therefore, let me simply say that as the Canadian national anthem was played today, we know that Canadians of Portuguese background were not only proud of their own country and heritage, but also proud to be great Canadians, and we want to thank them for their contribution to Canada.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I want to say that New Democrats celebrate with Carl DeFaria and many other members of his community on this occasion of Portugal Day.

I say as well that the community celebrating the 50th anniversary of the start of Portuguese immigration are celebrating and honouring the pioneers. I want to say to the pioneers that New Democrats appreciate the hard work and the long hours many of our pioneers put in, the overwork and underpayment of so many of our early immigrants, who worked hard trying to find work all over Ontario.

In those early years it was very difficult finding work. My father had a similar kind of experience. It didn't matter to him what he had to do. He knew he had to find work and needed to work to be able to make some money to call his family. My father was here in 1956 and we came in 1962. So some of us are very familiar with the sacrifices they made for us, to be strong for themselves and to become strong Canadians. It wasn't very easy. Many of their children and our children forget the sacri-

fices our early pioneers made, so these are opportunities for everyone, in every community, to remember what immigrants did and the sacrifices they made for themselves and their families to become active and very strong Canadians.

Carl, with you, I celebrate and honour those pioneers, as you have done over so many years. I celebrate as well the role that ACAPO has made. ACAPO is the central coordinating organization of all the clubs and associations, and they have put in a great deal of time to create the parade we've seen. It was lively and showed tremendous vitality and colour. I enjoyed, we enjoyed and Howard Hampton enjoyed taking part in and being able to witness those celebrations, along with many others—our friend Jordan Berger, who was there—and the diversity, colour and strength of multiculturalism.

I wanted to take the time to congratulate ACAPO because they put in, at their own expense, time and money to share the pride of their history, their roots, and their strength as Canadians with all of us.

I congratulate as well Consul General Perestrello, who is leaving us. I want to take the opportunity on behalf of New Democrats to congratulate him on his elegance and intelligence, his ability to coordinate with everyone so that whatever he does in representing Portuguese Canadians is passed on to us in ways that are honourable, and that he and I can be proud of. I thank him, and his charming and intelligent wife, Jane, for the sacrifices she makes as well.

We take pride in the fact that many of our early Portuguese Canadians went to the coast of Newfoundland and Labrador in 1504, where they started cod fishing. I just want to add, incidentally, that Marilyn Churley, our friend and colleague from Toronto-Danforth—that was her home and she has a great affinity with the history that Portuguese Canadians brought to Newfoundland and Labrador. I wanted to share that with everyone, in case they don't know, Marilyn.

1410

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): They don't know. Thank you.

Mr Marchese: As well, I want to congratulate Carl DeFaria for sensitizing his caucus to the strength, the vitality, the richness and the contribution of Portuguese Canadians in Ontario. I'm sure you did a good job of that, Carl, with all the activities we have done and everything you've done in your own caucus to share that history.

So, to you, Carl DeFaria, to ACAPO, to all Portuguese Canadians in my riding and every riding across Ontario, I wish every Portuguese Canadian—

Remarks in Portuguese.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: We were given to understand that the government House leader would be at question period today.

The Speaker: I believe the member will be here. Yes, he's on his way.

We'll hear from the member for Sudbury as we rag the puck.

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): On a point of order while we're waiting, Mr Speaker: I move unanimous consent for second and third reading of Bill 44, An Act to amend the Occupational Health and Safety Act to require the appointment of a workplace carcinoma committee.

The Speaker: The member has asked for unanimous consent for second and third reading. Is there unanimous consent? I'm afraid I heard some noes.

Mr Duncan: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I seek unanimous consent for second and third reading of Bill 76, An Act to amend the Health Insurance Act.

The Speaker: The member has asked for unanimous consent for second and third reading of Bill 76. Is there unanimous consent? I'm afraid I heard some noes.

Mr Bartolucci: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I move unanimous consent for second and third reading of Bill 51, An Act to amend the Occupational Health and Safety Act with respect to acts of workplace violence.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent on Bill 51? I'm afraid I heard some noes.

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I seek unanimous consent for second and third reading of Bill 42, An Act to bring health and safety programs to Ontario students—a very good bill.

The Speaker: The member has asked for unanimous consent. I'm afraid I heard some noes.

ORAL QUESTIONS

MINISTER'S EXPENSES

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is to the Minister of the Environment. On April 28, 1992, Ernie Eves stood in this House and called for Shelley Martel's resignation, saying, "Most people I talk to understand that lying is a very serious offence. They understand that there are serious consequences to be paid if they lie.... They don't understand how a cabinet minister ... doesn't seem to have to live by the same rules ... they do in their day-to-day lives."

Yesterday, Minister, rather than admit the truth, you said you never said things which in fact you did say.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. I would ask the leader of the official opposition to be careful. As you know, we're treading very finely here. We're going to ask the table as well. I would ask him to be very careful. As you know, implying that somebody lied is also unparliamentary, and I would ask the member to continue and keep that in mind, please.

Mr McGuinty: Along the way, you resorted to attacking a reporter's professional integrity because he blew the whistle on you.

Today that reporter produced a tape of your interview. Your voice is clearly heard saying exactly what he reported and what you said you did not say.

Given what the Premier has said about these matters in the past, you would have thought that he would have demanded your resignation.

Minister, my question to you here today is, why have you not offered your resignation?

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): I think this is a bizarre situation. You're suggesting to me that what I said outside with respect to an interview I had, which I didn't agree with, is somehow grounds for a resignation of a minister.

I still say that the story was torqued; I still say it was unfairly written. If he has a dispute with me with respect to whether or not the story was fair, which I don't think it was, then he should take it up with me. I stand by what I said.

I can also suggest to you that there are comments attributed to me in here which I did not say. So that's my position.

Mr McGuinty: Minister, you were interviewed by Mr Mittelstaedt. He kept very, very careful records. You said that he "totally torqued and fabricated that story—absolutely torqued and fabricated." Could you tell us today, then, which words, audible in your voice, recorded on a tape recorder, you are now claiming you never said.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I don't have the original story here. I wish someone could grab it for me. The tone and tenor of the story was torqued, in my opinion. Torqued. The tone and tenor of the story was worked up over some six months that he suggested. He wrote the story with an idea of putting the situation in the worst possible light he could possibly put it in. I believe it was torqued. He attributed to me comments, which I don't have with me at this time, such as—and I'm working from memory—that the work regime or whatever was so light—here we go: for instance, "But later ... he conceded that the stay in Paris had so little official business that he decided to pick up" the six nights of the hotel cost on his own. I never said that. I never said that that stay in Paris had so little official business I decided to pick up the costs on my own. I never said that. That's what he wrote. That's what he said I said. "But later in the interview, he conceded"—it was like I was conceding this. I didn't say that.

Mr McGuinty: Let's understand what happened here. You went to Europe. You spent a lot of money there: \$27,000 that was expensed to the ministry. You then hid \$5,000 to \$10,000 in additional expenses through OPG.

The Speaker: The member is going to have to withdraw the word "hidden," please.

Mr McGuinty: I withdraw, Speaker.

Instead of admitting what you did was wrong, you attacked that reporter's professional integrity and you claimed you never said what he had accurately reported.

I think, Minister, it was wrong for you to put expenses through OPG. I think it was wrong for you to claim that you never said things we later learned were in fact accurate, based on a tape recording. I think it was wrong for you to attack a whistle-blower's integrity. I think the right thing for you to do today is to resign. Will you now stand up and resign?

Hon Mr Stockwell: This line of questioning is totally, unbelievably bizarre. To suggest that I hid anything is so untrue. To suggest that I didn't answer the questions directly and up front is not the case. I answered all these questions, and I think even the most reasonable person would say that this article was torqued. He wanted me to look bad. He spent six months trying to get me to look bad and all he came up with was some ground transportation in Paris. I paid those bills—or the government didn't pay any of those bills; didn't charge OPG. Yes, I think it's torqued. That's what I believe. I still stand by that.

Listen, you have Mr Mittelstaedt and you put him up here and you hold him in such high esteem. Maybe I don't hold him in as high esteem as you do. That's a difference of opinion; it's not a resigning offence.

The Speaker: New question, the leader of the official opposition.

Mr McGuinty: I have a question to the same minister. Ultimately it's not about Mr Mittelstaedt; it's about you and your integrity and information that you conveyed to the Ontario public. That's what this is all about.

You were interviewed by Mr Mittelstaedt. He kept very careful records. You said that he "totally torqued and fabricated that story." That's your quotation. You went on to say it was "absolutely torqued and fabricated." Again, that is your quotation.

I'm asking you again, Minister, which words, available in your voice, recorded on that tape recorder, are you now claiming you never said?

Interjection.

Hon Mr Stockwell: "But later in the interview, he conceded"—

The Speaker: I'm sorry to interrupt the minister. This is the last warning for the Minister of Colleges and Universities. If she says any more, I'm going to throw her out. I'm not going to put up with it. You've been yelling since the first question. I will not put up with it. This is your last warning. If you want to be thrown out, keep it up, and the Sergeant at Arms will remove you. Sorry, Minister.

Hon Mr Stockwell: "But later in the interview, he conceded that the stay in Paris had so little official business that he decided to pick up" the six nights of the hotel cost himself.

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Mr McGuinty: Minister, you know that in the matter of Shelley Martel it wasn't just Ernie Eves who stood in his place and demanded a higher standard of integrity. Do you forget what you used to say on this side of the House? Is that what you're telling us, Minister? I will remind you of some of the things. Apparently the ethical standards which you so embraced on this side of the House you have chosen to abandon over there. Let me remind you of what you said.

After the Martel incident, you said, and I quote, "I would have dusted her so fast, it would have made your head spin." That's what you said. Since Ernie Eves has failed to live up to the ethical standards he once held in opposition, I'm now asking you, Minister, what about the ethical standards you embraced on this side of the

House? Why don't you stand up, tell us you still embrace those same standards and that you will now resign?

Hon Mr Stockwell: The Integrity Commissioner is reviewing this issue. I'm going to wait for his response.

As far as the questions you're asking me today, how much clearer could I be? I read the paragraph to you. I read it to you. I didn't say that.

I know we're in a partisan place. I know it's up to everybody in here to be political, and I know it's up to everybody in here to reach down to levels that I've never seen before in order to score political points. I'm going to tell you right now, Mr Leader of the Opposition, I didn't say that. I don't know what more I can tell you. He didn't put it in quotes. Why? Because I didn't say it. He said it, not me. I know this story was designed and built in that fashion. I'm going to tell you, Mr Leader of the Opposition, when I got asked questions from Mr Mittelstaedt, I responded. I know what I said. I didn't say that.

Mr McGuinty: Again, Minister, it's about more than this story. I think you should resign. The right and honourable thing for you to do is to resign, and I'll give you four reasons why you should do that: first of all, because you put expenses through OPG, and I think that is wrong. You claimed you never said things which you in fact did say. I think that was wrong. You attacked a whistleblower's integrity because he blew the whistle on you. I think that was wrong. Finally, you should resign, Mr Stockwell, because on this side of the House you would have insisted, you would have demanded that that individual over there who did these kinds of things resign. You should stand up now and do the right thing and resign.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I'm not going to. I don't think I should. I don't think I did anything wrong. I think I was pilloried. I think the story did pillory me. If you listen to my answers—I gave them as clearly as I could. I didn't say that. If you have some evidence to prove I did say that, then bring it forward. Otherwise, I stand by my comments, Mr Leader of the Opposition. I didn't say that. I think the story was torqued, and I live with those comments.

I have not had a single person in my caucus come to me and say, "You should resign." I've not had a single person in the Premier's office tell me, "This is a resigning offence." All they've said to me has supported the position I put forward.

Do I believe we're at a stage now where I think stories get written like this because we're closing in on an election and there are two leaders' questions coming to me about this thing, when there are issues in the province that we could be talking about? Sure I do. I know what this is all about. This is what they taught you in Chicago, wasn't it? This is what they taught you in Washington. This is what they taught you for \$27,000 of taxpayers' money. It won't work here.

SARS

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Health.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. The leader of the third party has a question.

Mr Hampton: Minister, today your press release says, "Eves Government Launches Independent SARS Commission." I know you're doing your best to spin your announcement as a public inquiry. But when we look at the details of it, we find that significant aspects of the Public Inquiries Act are omitted. For example, under part III of the act, a commissioner would have the power of search and seizure. He would be able to go into a hospital's records or, say, the Ministry of Health's records and would be able to obtain documents or directives. But you have omitted that power. This will be an investigation without the power to, in effect, search for documents, directives or evidence. Maybe you can tell us what kind of investigation doesn't have the power to search for documents or take those documents that they find are relevant to the inquiry. What kind of investigation is that?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I'd be happy to educate the leader of the third party on what I think is an announcement that is important to the people of Ontario, who frankly have a right to know what goes on in the Ontario health care system and what we can do to ensure that the health and safety of Ontarians is first and foremost.

I can tell you that Justice Campbell has the powers of a commission under the Public Inquiries Act, part II. He can issue summonses, he can compel production of documents, he can receive evidence and he can administer oaths. There is whistle-blower protection for those who need that kind of protection so that they are not subject to adverse employment action for providing information to Justice Campbell and the commission. Those are the protections in place.

I say to the honourable leader of the third party: is he in some way suggesting that Justice Campbell cannot do his job? I think he can, and I think he will.

Mr Hampton: The commissioner will not have the power of search and seizure. Yes, he may summon a witness under your restricted terms, but if the witness refuses to turn up, then the commissioner has to go off to court for a very lengthy court process. You have effectively hamstrung the commissioner in that respect. Further, part I of the Public Inquiries Act states very clearly that all hearings of an inquiry are open to the public except where the commissioner conducting the inquiry is of the opinion that they involve, for example, public security.

These will not be public hearings. You will not provide for public hearings. You will not provide for the examination of a witness in public. What you've designed by omitting part I and part III of the Public Inquiries Act is exactly what we said it was going to be: something that will take place in a backroom. Nurses who are sick, nurses who are dying, nurses who are going above and beyond the call of duty in our hospitals are asking for a public inquiry. Why won't you give it to them?

Hon Mr Clement: Let me read part 4 of the terms of reference for the SARS commission: "Mr Justice Campbell shall hold such public or private meetings as he deems advisable in the course of his investigation"—public or private, leader of the third party. He has the discretion, he has the power, he has the right to make the determination. Why are you trying to do the job of an independent commissioner? Why don't you let him do his job instead of trying to second-guess the independent commissioner? Why don't you do your job rather than trying to do his job?

Mr Hampton: You would know there's a difference between a public meeting and a public hearing. But here you are trying to confuse a public meeting with public hearing. They are not the same at all. What you've designed here would not give standing to the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario, for example. It would not give standing to the Ontario Nurses' Association to bring a lawyer to examine witnesses and cross-examine witnesses. Everything we expect to see in an independent inquiry, where people get to test the truth of the other side, you have very carefully omitted. What you've designed here is a backroom process that will not result in public hearings, will not result in the cross-examination of witnesses, will not result in the kind of public process that we saw in Walkerton.

Minister, nurses out there are risking their lives. You should at least be decent enough to grant them the public inquiry they've called for. Will you finally do that, or are you going to try to hide behind this smokescreen?

1430

Hon Mr Clement: This is a commission under the Health Protection and Promotion Act and part II of the Public Inquiries Act—issue summonses, independent judge, independent review, compel production of documents. He can give standing to each and every person he so chooses. I ask the honourable member again, why will you not let the independent Mr Justice Campbell do his job and find the answers that we all in this chamber want to hear and want to find out? Why don't you let him do his job? Why don't you let him be the independent commissioner that we want him to be? Why don't you stop being the judge and jury of the people of Ontario? Quite frankly, you're not very good at it.

SAME-SEX MARRIAGE

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Attorney General. Today the Ontario Court of Appeal, headed by your predecessor, Roy McMurtry, reached an important decision in terms of equality. The court ruled that same-sex marriages must be registered in Ontario. This is a good day for equality in Ontario. Yet the Premier seems reluctant to agree with the court's decision. He says he has no plans to register same-sex marriages at any time soon. Attorney General, will you confirm that the government of Ontario will obey the court ruling and will register same-sex marriages immediately, as the court ordered?

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Attorney General, Minister Responsible for Native Affairs): I've only received the decision, and I haven't got all the way through this particular decision. Marriage is defined by our federal government, and it is their decision whether they want to appeal this particular decision, whether they want to deal with it in a legislative manner or whether they want to do something else within the law to deal with it. As a government, we will follow whatever the court has directed us with regard to this issue, because this issue, as I said before, is within the realm of our federal Parliament.

Mr Hampton: My question was, what will your government do? It struck me as a bit odd that the Premier would say he had no intention of following the law as set down by the Court of Appeal of Ontario. We'll get to that in due time, but I want to ask you this: the Liberals in Ottawa may in fact, unfortunately, appeal this to the Supreme Court of Canada, so I'm asking you, in following the court's order, will you join with me today and write to the federal Attorney General and ask the Liberals in Ottawa to obey the law as well?

Hon Mr Sterling: I believe the Premier said that he wanted to review the decision of the Court of Appeal, which I have in front of me. It would be, of course, within the realm of the federal Minister of Justice, who I believe is going to indicate later today whether he is going to appeal this decision or not. It will be up to the federal government to decide, as they were the main litigant in this matter, as to whether or not they are going to appeal it to the Supreme Court of Canada. As I said in my previous answer, we will of course follow what the court says in the decision and follow the letter of the law.

MINISTER'S EXPENSES

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): My question is to the government House leader. There is going to be no ruling, no adjudication, no review from the Integrity Commissioner, as you and the Premier have suggested, and you know it. The Integrity Commissioner is going to provide you with a confidential advisory letter, and you can do with that letter whatever you wish. That's what the statute says, and you know that. You should also know that you're supposed to get that confidential advisory letter before you go on the trip, not afterwards to exonerate yourself after the expense has been made.

There are not going to be any hearings, there are not going to be any affidavits, there is not going to be any submission from one side or the other. There is going to be a letter from you to the Integrity Commissioner, and he will provide his advice based upon the facts as you present them to him. I say to you that you are abusing this particular process. I say to you, Minister, that you are the one who is torquing and prevaricating as to what the Integrity Commissioner—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. I'm afraid you're going to have to withdraw both of those comments.

Mr Bryant: "Torquing" and "prevaricating"?

The Speaker: Yes. You have to withdraw.

Mr Bryant: Withdrawn.

The Speaker: It may be what the member said about somebody else in the press; it's different with a member.

Mr Bryant: I say then to the House leader, you are ratcheting up what in fact is in place here and you are ratcheting up and abusing the Office of the Integrity Commissioner with this effort.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): Oh, my goodness. Look, he can make it public or he can do it privately. He can make a decision—

Interjection.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Oh, yes. Do you know what? I've said it in the past and I'll say it again: whatever decision comes out of the Integrity Commissioner's office I will abide by. If the Integrity Commissioner says I made a mistake, then I made a mistake—I admit it. If the Integrity Commissioner says we need a policy change but there's no mistake here, I'll abide by that too.

I give you my undertaking: whatever he provides me with as far as a written response, I'll give it to you.

Mr Bryant: I say to you, nice try. Stop using the Integrity Commissioner's office for your political purposes to shield you from accountability. I say to you, Minister, stop pretending that we need an inquiry when we've already got a taped and signed confession. He did it. We know what the facts are. We don't need an opinion from the Integrity Commissioner into what happened, just like we don't need an opinion letter from him as to who won the Stanley Cup.

We need accountability. We need to have disclosed to the public the ministerial expenses from the ministers here who have put them through government corporations. We need to have the loopholes filled. If there needs to be any inquiry by anybody here, it ought to be into your judgment, into this government's standards and into this Premier's lack of leadership.

The Speaker: Minister?

Hon Mr Stockwell: Mr Speaker, I don't know what the question was.

The problem is that you think Anaheim won the Stanley Cup. That's the difficulty you've got. You are so out of touch and so distorted with respect to what's going on.

The Integrity Commissioner is there to do just this. He's there to take requests referred to him by members of this House. I'm trying to tell you that I did what I thought any other honourable member would do.

I want to remind you of something. I remember when your member got referred to the Integrity Commissioner.

Interjections.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Let me just finish. Not once, not one time between referring that and to its happening did I say a word, not a heckle—I didn't. I have great faith in the Integrity Commissioner. Justice Coulter Osborne is the second-highest jurist in the province of Ontario. I've spoken to his office. I will tell you flat out: I don't think he feels the least bit abused.

SARS

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): My question is for the Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing responsible for urban affairs. We all know that the effects of the current SARS outbreak are being felt in many sectors of Ontario's economy, and Scarborough, being the centre of the storm, certainly has borne the brunt of many of these effects.

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Many people's incomes are being affected, either directly or indirectly, by a downturn in economic activity. I know our government is effectively dealing with this challenge on many different levels, but when it comes to tenants, of whom there are many in my riding affected by this outbreak, paying rent is an immediate concern. What is our government doing to stop tenants from being evicted because they have lost income due to quarantine from SARS?

Hon Tina R. Molinari (Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I want to thank the member for Scarborough Centre, who works very hard for her constituents, for this very important question.

Our government believes that tenants should not be unfairly evicted. That's why the Tenant Protection Act gives the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal the power to refuse evictions if they are deemed unfair. I am pleased to report that the chair of the tribunal has shown initiative on this very issue. The tribunal has issued an emergency policy to reschedule cases until quarantine periods have passed. The TPA ensures that tenants are protected. Any landlord who illegally evicts tenants is subject to a fine of up to \$10,000 individually or \$50,000 corporately.

Although this penalty is in place, I would still appeal to all landlords to consider the effects that SARS is having on their tenants. They should give tenants who have lost income because of quarantine or SARS-related layoffs time to pay their rent.

Ms Mushinski: Thank you for that response, Minister. I know that's important information for tenants in my great riding of Scarborough Centre. It's appropriate guidance, hopefully, for landlords as well.

While we're on the subject of the Tenant Protection Act, I wonder if you can clarify for renters in my riding, because they want to know what safeguards are in place to protect them against unreasonable rent increases as a result of spikes in utility costs that landlords realize from time to time.

Interjections.

Ms Mushinski: Can you tell me, and I hope the Liberal opposition will listen to this, because clearly they don't have any answers, what mechanisms are in place to make sure tenants aren't unfairly burdened with this type of case?

Hon Mrs Molinari: This government is committed to ensuring that rent increases are fair to both tenants and landlords. The Tenant Protection Act is strong legislation that protects tenants against unfair rent increases and

allows landlords to recoup extraordinary increases in their operating costs when necessary.

Through an amendment to the regulation in the act, which was announced on December 31 last year, tenants are protected. Our government recognizes that when a landlord applies for an above-guideline rent increase, they may receive a refund or a rebate. That's why we've amended the regulations under the TPA to ensure that any utility refund or rebate will be deducted from the landlord's costs if they apply for an above-guideline rent increase. This regulation change is fair to all tenants.

MINISTER'S EXPENSES

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): My question is to the Minister of the Environment. Minister, yesterday you used the word "fabrication" to describe quotes that were attributed to you by Martin Mittelstaedt. Earlier today in questioning from my leader, you attempted to read a paragraph into the record that was in fact not a quote. Yesterday, very clearly, you said that quotes attributed to you—quotes; that's where things like that are around them—were a fabrication.

In questioning from my leader today, you defended yourself by reading a paragraph into the record that was, I believe, not a quote at all. Mr Minister, proof has been offered by Martin Mittelstaedt today that the quotes that were attributed to you were said by you.

I would ask you, in light of your past record on this matter, dealing with the member from Sudbury in 1992 and the strength of your position then, why would you not do the honourable thing and resign?

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): I guess because I consider that to be attributed to me. I think when people read a story and it says, "But later in the interview, he conceded that his stay in Paris had so little official business that he decided to pick up the six-night hotel [cost]"—to me, an average person reading that would say, "He said that. The reporter says that he conceded that." I think anyone who would read that, any third party, impartial person, would say, "Boy, he said that?" I didn't say that.

Mr Smitherman: All that we need to go with that dance is a little song, because this member, who has spent almost his entire adult life in public service, very well knows the difference between something that may be attributed in an editorial way and something that is a quote. Today he seeks to convince this House, because it suits his story today, that he was talking about a paragraph that was in fact not a quote.

So I say to the minister one more time: since yesterday you said that quotes that were attributed to you were a fabrication, and since it has been proven by the reporter that that is not the case, will you stand in your place and do the honourable thing and resign?

Hon Mr Stockwell: Listen, I just think there's a quantum leap in your logic. I think you're arguing about how many angels or fairies can dance on the head of a pin. I think your position is bizarre. You're asking me to resign

because you think that he said this, and it isn't in quotations. I disagree with it because I suggest it was a quotation, and what he said was, "But later in the interview, he conceded." If this is it—this is it, folks. We've now been reduced to this: I said it was a quotation, when in fact he said, "But later in the interview, he conceded," and they're asking for a minister's resignation. This is not believable.

Did you hear about Tony's and the Premier's announcement with respect to the SARS issue? Did you hear about that? They've appointed someone to look into the SARS issue. I don't know if you heard about that, but that's a really important announcement today. The public is very interested, and they would like to know what you think. You know what I think the public thinks about whether it's a quotation or this or that? I think this is so infinitesimal, so minor that I'm not even answering the question.

REFUGEES

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): My question is for the Minister of Public Safety and Security. Approximately three weeks ago, federal Auditor General Sheila Fraser revealed that the federal government has lost track of about 36,000 failed refugee claimants, individuals who had been ordered removed from this country. The Auditor General also said that these cases may pose a safety concern.

The federal government has dismissed the Auditor General's concerns about security. I ask the Minister of Public Safety and Security what our government's position is with regard to this situation.

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Minister of Public Safety and Security): I thank the member for the question. We are very concerned about the risk that these individuals might pose to the people of our province, and we're not alone. The Toronto Police Association has also echoed those concerns. Federal Minister Coderre has dismissed the Auditor General's concerns, but a check of CPIC indicates that, as of today, there are almost 37,000 prime warrants for these individuals, with an additional 50,000-plus alias entries attached to them. This is clearly a legitimate public safety and security matter.

The Auditor General was correct. The federal government has handled the immigration system in a haphazard and dangerous way.

Mr Tascona: I thank the honourable member for his answer.

Several months ago, we all read about the "yo-yo bandits," convicted criminals deported from this country on three separate occasions, only to return and be engaged, or allegedly engaged, in criminal activity once again.

Last week, the Liberal member for Hamilton Mountain said that any political party supportive of a made-in-Ontario immigration policy, similar to the program currently in place in the province of Quebec, is "scapegoating immigrants and insulting all Ontarians."

I ask the Minister of Public Safety and Security, what is his view?

Hon Mr Runciman: As you know, I can't comment on any specific case, but allow me to respond to the accusations of scapegoating made by the member from Hamilton Mountain.

Let me be clear: this government believes that Ontario's prosperity has been, and continues to be, strengthened by immigration and the diversity of our people. Let no member opposite be confused. The Ernie Eves government is battling illegal immigrants, such as these nearly 37,000 prime warrants being hunted. Allegations like the one from the member opposite are indicative of the Liberal Party's propensity to slander and throw mud at anyone who attempts to deal with this issue.

The truth of the matter is that not nearly enough is being done from the moment these illegal immigrants land on Canadian soil. In recent weeks, the people of Ontario have been alerted to improper medical screening procedures at points of entry into Canada, potentially exposing Canadians to infectious disease. Last week, there were allegations brought forward that federal immigration officers—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The minister's time is up, I'm afraid.

SCHOOL SAFETY

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): My question is to the Minister of Education. Parents are really concerned about the safety of their children. When we asked this question yesterday, your Premier made no commitment to address the issue of safety. Instead of dealing with this issue, you made an announcement to bring in so-called outside experts, ie non-certified teaching staff. You were willing to find dollars for this, but there is no funding to bring back caretakers, lunchroom supervisors, educational assistants, principals and vice-principals—the people who keep our kids safe. Minister, explain this to me and to many of the parents across Ontario.

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Deputy Premier, Minister of Education): I find the remarks and allegations of the member opposite unfortunate, because when our government introduced, first, the Safe Schools Act in 2000, both the NDP and the Liberals voted against the Safe Schools Act.

Interjection.

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Hon Mrs Witmer: I'd also like the member to know that the Toronto District School Board has today sent out, to principals, streetproofing tips for parents. I'd also like you to know that the Toronto District School Board—all across Toronto, local communities—they are jointly meeting with the police. They have been advised that security staff and safe school coordinators are working with the police on heightened alert and are ready to assist. I would say to you that the Toronto District School Board is taking all the action it possibly can in order to ensure—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The member's time is up.

While I'm up, this is the last warning for the member for Windsor West. If she continues, she'll be asked to leave as well. We can't have you continuing to yell across.

I apologize to the member for Trinity-Spadina. And the supplementary?

Mr Marchese: Minister, it seems you have money for all the wrong things and no funding to do the right thing. Ontario parents like Cathy Dandy, who is here today with her child, want you to look out for the safety of their children. Your board supervisor is looking at replacing 300 caretakers and cutting kindergarten education assistants by half. What kind of government are you, I ask, when you care more about finding money for non-qualified teachers than for caretakers, education assistants, lunchroom supervisors, vice-principals and principals, who are the eyes and ears of school safety?

Hon Mrs Witmer: Unfortunately, the statements the member opposite is making are not founded on fact. We've made no announcements regarding teachers who are not qualified to teach in the classroom. We made an announcement yesterday about the fact that volunteers could participate in after-school activities. They were unpaid volunteers, so you are wrong.

I would say to you today that you probably owe the principals in the city of Toronto an apology. They are working diligently in co-operation with the police to ensure the safety of children. Letters have gone home. They're taking every precaution necessary. They're having daily consultations with the safe schools office. An adviser from the safe schools office is visiting schools. I would just say to the member opposite that when we introduced the Safe Schools Act in 2000 to protect the safety of our children, you and the Liberals first voted against it.

MINISTER'S EXPENSES

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): The question is to the Minister of the Environment. Minister—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): If you could just stop the clock for a quick moment.

Continue, leader of the official opposition.

Mr McGuinty: Minister, you continue to maintain that the reporter got it wrong, that he fabricated his story. You take issue with a particular sentence, the one where Mr Mittelstaedt wrote: "... he conceded"—talking about you—"that the stay in Paris had so little official business that he decided to pick up his six-night hotel...." What you in fact said was, "Because we had a prolonged stay in Paris, we arranged meetings that were a little sparse, so I decided it was better I paid them." Minister, can you tell me what is the difference? Mittelstaedt says, "...he conceded that the stay in Paris had so little official business that he decided to pick up his six-night hotel,"

and you said, "Because we had a prolonged stay in Paris, we arranged meetings that were a little sparse, so I decided it was better I paid them." What's the difference?

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): I guess we have a difference of opinion, leader of the official opposition. He also said during that same interview that he thought the meeting schedule was a little sparse, as they said. I said, no, it was a very heavy meeting schedule. We had 12 meetings in 14 days. That was also part of the context of the column. So why on the one hand would I have said, "Yes, it was a busy schedule. We were meeting quite a bit," and on the other hand say, that I conceded so little official business that "he decided to pick up his own tab"? It doesn't make any sense. Why would I say, yes, we were very busy, and then on the other hand, when I was talking about the tail end of the trip and why we picked up the tab, because on the tail end of the trip we couldn't get a connecting flight—that's what I said.

Mr McGuinty: You talk about trying to figure out how many angels can dance on the head of a pin. The issue here is you can't justify sending \$5,000 to \$10,000 worth of expenses over to OPG. That's what this is all about. You've got trouble admitting that, you've got trouble facing up to that, and you've got trouble recognizing that that is wrong. So a reporter blew the whistle on you. "Big deal. Those things happen from time to time." I think the way you should have reacted was to say, "I got it wrong. I did something that was wrong. I should not have sent \$5,000 to \$10,000 worth of expenses through OPG. It was wrong for me to claim that I never said those things. It was wrong for me to attack the personal and professional integrity of a reporter." That's what you should have done. I think the right thing for you to do is to stand up today, given all those wrongs, and resign.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I guess this is the fundamental question. I don't think I did anything wrong.

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): That's the problem.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Maybe you're right. I say to the member, Mr Parsons, that may be right. You have an opinion that I did; I have an opinion that I didn't. So what did I do? I went to the adjudicator, Justice Coulter Osborne, and said, "Please, Mr Osborne, as the Integrity Commissioner for Ontario"—that we've all appointed—

Interjection: Unanimously.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Unanimously—"Please, could you settle this dispute, because the opposition thinks I'm wrong and I don't. What do you think?" You know what I'd like to know before we start going into this much further? I'd like to know what he thinks?

BEER AND LIQUOR SALES

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): My question today is for the Minister of Consumer and Business Services. Constituents in my riding of Simcoe North and other Simcoe county ridings and across Ontario want

government to deliver services more conveniently and closer to home. I know that this government has been a leader in making government work for working families. I know that the LCBO, which reports to your ministry, has been working hard to improve the service it provides to Ontarians. In fact, one of the most successful programs currently underway is the expansion of the agency store program in Ontario. Could you please let the House know how this program has been progressing here in our province?

Hon Tim Hudak (Minister of Consumer and Business Services): The agency store program is an important and exciting program that helps out consumers and small businesses in rural Ontario, a partnership between the LCBO and The Beer Store and existing private enterprise, to allow people who live in small-town Ontario who have a longer drive into the city to go to an LCBO or Beer Store to have access within their own communities. It's been a very successful program. The ball started rolling under my predecessor, the Honourable Norm Sterling. I know it's a very popular program that has seen money being kept in small-town Ontario, and I can tell you some good stories about stores that have seen an increase in their businesses as grocery stores, variety stores etc, as a result.

I know the member for Simcoe North has been a very strong advocate for this program on behalf of rural Ontario. I know he's advocated for communities in his riding. He's probably very excited about Friday's announcement that Joyland Beach and Warminster are new agency store communities. I congratulate the member on his efforts.

Mr Dunlop: These agency stores are great news for communities in my riding and across the province. For example, in Simcoe-Grey, Minister Wilson's riding, Minesing, Feversham, Singhampton, Thornton and Beeton all have new agency stores, and they're working out very well.

Communities like Craighurst are already enjoying the benefits of an agency store. Last summer, I was very pleased when the minister joined me to officially open the agency store in Craighurst. The owner of that particular facility actually spent \$1.5 million and included the agency store as part of that.

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I understand that the other new stores opened by this government have also been very successful. With these new LCBO outlets opening up in existing stores, I'm certain that there will be questions about young people accessing their products. For these new stores to be truly successful, they will have to provide the same high standards of service and social responsibility as a regular LCBO store.

Minister, please let us know how you're ensuring that agency stores follow the same high standards as regular LCBO stores.

Hon Mr Hudak: I enjoyed the trip to Craighurst. I know it has been a big boon, as consumers are spending more dollars in small-town Ontario as a result.

This is an important question from the member in terms of how we check to make sure minors don't have access to alcohol: the exact same standards that exist in the LCBO or the Beer Store—for example, the Check 25 program—are enforced at the agency stores. The retailers themselves must go through this intensive training. I'm pleased to report, as well, that while no instances were brought to my attention, there are strong penalties in case they are: fines up to \$500,000 or a potential loss of a licence. I am pleased to say we have not heard of these incidences in my office, but those penalties are in place. Whether you're in Stevensville or the Summerhill flagship of the LCBO, there are very high standards to ensure that there is no access to alcohol for minors in these programs.

MINISTER'S EXPENSES

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): My question is for the government House leader. You said that the inquiry process under the Members' Integrity Act was a similar process as you are currently invoking from the Integrity Commissioner. You will know that under the Members' Integrity Act, there is the possibility of an inquiry with submissions and affidavits submitted and an opportunity for meetings. It's a fairly elaborate process. It takes many, many weeks, if not months. It involves a tremendous amount of evidence.

That's one process, but that's not the process that you're invoking. The process that you're invoking is the same process that a number of us invoke all the time. We ask the Integrity Commissioner for some advice, confidential advice, and we can do with it what we will. You are wrong to say that he can release it or not release it, and you are wrong to say that the process that you are invoking, the confidential advice, is the same as a full-blown inquiry, and you know it.

So I would ask the minister, would you please clarify to this House exactly the process that you're invoking with the Integrity Commissioner with respect to your OPG expenses?

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): I simply phoned the Integrity Commissioner and suggested, "I saw this story, and this is the query. Would you please investigate it and report back to me? If I can be of any service or help or provide you with any information, I will do so readily and quickly."

I then noticed that you had a press conference on Friday last and you said you wanted to broaden the scope of it. People asked for my comments, and I said, "Great; jim-dandy. Broaden the scope of it; I've got no problem with it." I simply called the Integrity Commissioner when I saw it, and asked him to review it and look into it.

I don't know what else you'd expect. I have great faith in the Integrity Commissioner, Coulter Osborne. I don't think he's going to be abused. I don't think he feels abused. I don't think he's feeling that it's a whitewash. From any conversations I've had with his office, they

seemed perfectly happy with what I did, and they said that to me: "You've done the exact right thing. The minute this was brought to your attention, you brought it to our attention. That's exactly what you're supposed to do, and we will investigate."

They've asked me for help. I said, "I'll be more than happy to co-operate. You ask me if I will show you what he wrote to me; I'll show it to you. I don't know what more you want."

Mr Bryant: I want you to tell the truth.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): You have to withdraw that.

Mr Bryant: I withdraw.

I want you to be totally accurate. You said you asked him to investigate, and you're leaving everybody in this House and everybody out there with the impression that he is investigating this matter. He's not investigating anything. He's looking at a letter you wrote, he's taking your words at face value and he's providing an opinion to you.

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Finance): How do you know that, Michael?

Mr Bryant: I know that because I can read a statute and that's how the process works.

You are trying to lead people in this province into believing that there's an adjudication, that there's a process and an investigation and an inquiry. There's none of that. None of that is taking place.

The Integrity Commissioner can't rule on this dispute. There's only one place that we can get to the bottom of this: it's in this Legislature, it's by you being held to account and by this government raising its standards to the standards that Ontarians expect from their ministers.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I want to say that I take great offence at what you have said. I find great offence in your suggesting that I should tell the truth.

I'm trying to be as cooperative and forthright with you as possible. The first thing I did was phone the Integrity Commissioner. They said that's the right thing to do. They asked me then to write them a letter; I wrote them a letter. They said to me that they will investigate. They've asked for information. I've supplied them with some information already.

Don't mouth that you know it's not true; don't mouth that to me. I take great offence at that. That's exactly what the office said. They've asked me for further information that I'm supposed to provide them with. I said yes. You asked me, if it isn't made public, could you have it? I said, "Yes, I'll give it to you." I don't know what more I could do. When the report comes out, I will give you what he tells me to do. I won't be able to hide behind anything.

I know you to be an honourable member. I don't think your comments in the beginning of your statement were fair or honourable.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): My question today is for the Associate Minister of Health and Long-

Term Care. I recently met with the board of directors of Anson House, a 42-bed long-term-care facility in Peterborough. Anson House is in the process of relocating to a new facility in Peterborough, St Joseph's at Fleming. The board told me they're looking forward to moving to the new site, where they'll be able to provide even better care for residents. The board of directors also thank their government for its support and funding and for overcoming the challenges they face during the transition.

Minister, I would like to ask if you could provide some details on the new St. Joseph's at Fleming long-term-care facility and why it will mean even better care for residents.

Hon Dan Newman (Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I thank the member for Peterborough for his question. I'm very pleased to hear that the board of directors of Anson House is looking forward to moving into their new home. I know that the member for Peterborough has worked very hard on their behalf.

The new St Joseph's at Fleming long-term-care facility will be home to some 200 redeveloped beds that will be eligible to receive up to \$15 million in provincial funding over 20 years to help with the cost of construction. These upgraded beds at St Joseph's will meet our government's new design standards for long-term-care facilities. These standards will provide more than quality care; they will provide a real home for these residents.

Mr Stewart: Minister, I would have leaned over and asked you, but I want all of Ontario to hear what a unique facility we are creating in Peterborough. I'm very pleased to hear that the new St. Joseph's facility will mean even better care for residents. Quality long-term care is important to my constituents, and it is important that our government make the investments to meet the needs of our growing and aging population. Ontario's seniors spend their lives building a prosperous province that we enjoy today. I'm proud to be part of a government that's working hard to improve the quality of life for all seniors in Ontario.

I would like to ask the associate minister what other improvements in long-term care are taking place in my riding and what is the status of the construction of long-term-care beds across Ontario?

Hon Mr Newman: I once again thank the very hard-working member for Peterborough for his question. It's my pleasure to say that a total of some 514 new and redeveloped long-term-care beds have been awarded in the member's riding of Peterborough. This is all part of our government's unprecedented \$1.2-billion commitment to build 20,000 new and redevelop 16,000 older long-term-care beds across our great province.

So far, 314 new and redeveloped beds have been built or are in operation within Peterborough. In fact, since 1998, more than 18,500 new long-term-care beds have been built or are being developed across our province, and more than 8,000 existing beds have been, or soon will be, redeveloped. I'm proud to say that these investments will mean that seniors in Peterborough, and indeed

throughout Ontario, will have access to the care they need when they need it.

1510

NEW HOME INSPECTION

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. People should be confident in their new homes or in a renovation that is done in their home. Your privatization of building inspection means that the same person who builds has his own agent inspect.

John Wright of the Large Municipalities Chief Building Officials says that your position is reckless. He also says, "It is absurd to expect these agents to be able to counteract the commercial pressure that will be put upon them."

You chose privatization and the potential conflict of interest. Given the events at Dominion Cement, do you now believe that public safety has been compromised?

Hon David Young (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): The member knows well or should know well, given that he has been in the Legislative Assembly for a considerable period of time, that it is most inappropriate to ask a question of or expect an answer from a minister about a case which is pending in front of a court. So I will presume that he is not expecting an answer to that question, although his words would suggest otherwise.

What I will tell you is that Bill 124, which has not come into effect yet but will shortly, is a bill which will add additional guarantees to consumers to ensure they have protections. It will ensure that whoever is doing the inspection passes the highest possible tests and will ensure that those individuals fulfill all criteria. It will ensure that those individuals, whether they work independently or for a municipality, have insurance in place so that if something goes wrong, if all of those additional tests and standards don't prevent something from going wrong, there will be insurance in place for the consumer.

Mr Prue: Municipalities across Ontario have been put in a straitjacket. They are forced to contract out because this government has chosen to download many costs upon them which they cannot bear. People are losing out and families are suffering because of shoddy work, particularly the people who purchased these homes from Dominion Cement or in which Dominion Cement was a contractor. These homes are structurally unsafe.

Will you reverse this bad law? Will you insist on public inspectors whose loyalties are with the consumers and not with those whose interests are only speed and profit?

Hon Mr Young: Clearly the member doesn't want to let the facts get in the way of a good rant. Talk about mixing apples and oranges, he's talking about an unfortunate occurrence that happened well in advance of a bill that hasn't come into effect yet.

What we are saying to you, sir, and to the people of this province is that we are bringing in tighter standards.

We are bringing in the toughest standards in the world. We are ensuring that all parties will have sufficient insurance so that in the future, should anything go wrong, there will be a remedy for consumers. They will be able to get their money back. They will be able to get their house repaired.

Don't try to turn things upside down. That doesn't serve you well, and it doesn't serve the people of this province.

PETITIONS

ABORTION

Ms Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): I'm very happy to introduce a petition on behalf of Mark Morin from my riding, who has gone to enormous trouble to collect some five pages of petitioners. I'm happy to table that today.

EDUCATION TAX CREDIT

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I am pleased to present a petition to the Legislature. It's signed by in excess of 75 constituents, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the province of Ontario has delayed the second phase of the equity in education tax credit for parents who choose to send their children to independent schools; and

"Whereas prior to the introduction of this tax credit, Ontario parents whose children attended independent schools faced a financial burden of paying taxes to an education system they did not use, plus tuition for the school of their choice; and

"Whereas the equity in education tax credits support parental choice in education and makes independent schools more accessible to all Ontario families;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully request that the government of Ontario reintroduce the second phase of the tax credit forthwith and continue—without delay—the previously announced timetable for the introduction of the tax credit over five years."

I affix my signature.

WASTE MANAGEMENT

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas we strenuously object to the proposed Richmond landfill expansion by Canadian Waste Services; and

"Whereas fractured limestone is an inappropriate location for a landfill; and

"Whereas the town of greater Napanee produces less than 1% of the waste sent to Richmond landfill and has

indicated that it is not a willing host of the proposed expansion; and

"Whereas the Ernie Eves government has indicated that they will break their promise that no community should have to accept waste against their will;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We request that the Conservative government keep their promise, stop the expansion of this landfill and make waste reduction a priority for Ontario."

I will affix my signature to this petition, because I am in full agreement.

ITER FUSION PROJECT

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I'm pleased to present a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham.

"Whereas the proposed ITER fusion research facility would result in 68,000 person-years of employment and an estimated \$9.4 billion in foreign investment;

"Whereas ITER would bring international scientists and researchers to Canada and place our nation in the forefront of new developments in research and technology;

"Whereas ITER is strongly supported by business, labour, educators, elected officials and citizens throughout Durham region, the host community;

"Whereas the province of Ontario has already recognized the economic importance of ITER to Canada and the world by committing \$300 million to support the Canadian ITER bid;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows: that the Parliament of Ontario take the necessary steps to strengthen the Canadian bid for the ITER research facility, including the commitment of more funds and other resources to support a successful Canadian bid; and that the province of Ontario ask the federal government to show the leadership and commitment necessary for Canada to win the ITER bid."

I'm pleased to sign this, endorsing my support for this very, very important project.

INSURANCE RATES

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Progressive Conservative government of Ernie Eves has failed to protect Ontario consumers who are experiencing skyrocketing automotive, home and commercial insurance rates; and

"Whereas the Ontario government has failed to create the regulatory environment that would adequately protect loyal customers in a tough insurance marketplace; and

"Whereas the Harris-Eves government has twice introduced ineffective legislation which has done nothing to stabilize insurance rates in the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas average individual increases in auto insurance rates over the past four years have increased by over 40%; and

"Whereas the people of Ontario are having difficulty obtaining reasonable insurance coverage or are being dropped as customers—even in cases where there has been no change in the risk factors;"

Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the following:

"(1) Introduce effective legislation to ensure those injured in automobile collisions have fair and rapid access to appropriate medical-rehabilitation services;

"(2) Reduce, then stabilize, insurance premiums in Ontario; and

"(3) Improve access to automobile insurance coverage through a more competitive marketplace."

I affix my signature to this petition.

HIGHWAY 407

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): Again, I am pleased to stand in this House and present a petition on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the timely and efficient movement of people and products is crucial to the success of the Ontario economy;

"Whereas the province of Ontario is meeting the challenge of traffic congestion in the greater Toronto area by improvements to our highway networks and by improved public transportation;

"Whereas the further construction of Highway 407 eastward into the Durham region would improve the flow of traffic in Durham region and throughout the GTA;

"Whereas the citizens and municipalities of Durham region have faced uncertainty over the final alignment of the proposed 407 highway for many years and are entitled to a timely resolution to this matter;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows: that the Parliament of Ontario take" all necessary "steps to fast-track the extension of Highway 407 eastward, into the regional municipality of Durham, while ensuring that all the necessary environmental assessment and public consultation processes are followed" according to the law.

I'm pleased to sign and endorse this on behalf of my constituents.

1520

ONTARIO DISABILITY SUPPORT PROGRAM

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North):

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the recipients of benefits under the Ontario disability act have not received a cost-of-living increase since ... 1987; and

"Whereas the cost of living in Ontario has increased in every one of the years since, especially for basic needs such as housing, food, utilities, transportation, clothing and household goods; and

"Whereas disabled Ontarians are recognized under the Ontario Disability Support Program Act, 1997, and as such have the right to have their basic needs met, including adequate housing, a proper and healthy diet, a bed that does not make them sicker and clothing that fits and is free of stains and holes; and

"Whereas their basic needs are no longer being met because the Ministry of Social Services has not increased the shelter and basic needs allowances of disabled Ontarians eligible to receive benefits under the Ontario disability support program to reflect the increased costs of shelter and basic needs (and in fact have reduced these benefits for those recipients who receive a disability benefit under the Canada pension plan); and

"Whereas the Ontarians with Disabilities Act does not protect the thousands of vulnerable people in Ontario who are dependent on others for their basic needs and care and who are eligible for benefits under the Ontario Disability Support Program Act, 1997;

"Therefore we, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, request the Ontario Legislature to urge the government to respect their own definition of basic needs and provide a cost-of-living increase to recipients of benefits through the Ontario Disability Support Program Act that is sufficient to cover the increased costs of their basic needs as of 2001 prices, and that this benefit not be reduced as a result of increases in the Canada pension plan benefit."

A couple of hundred people signed this petition, and I am very happy to add my name to it as I'm in full agreement with it.

OAK RIDGES MORaine

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): Again I'm receiving a number of petitions from my constituents. They know I will present them on their behalf.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Oak Ridges moraine is an ecological treasure that warrants protection and careful stewardship now and in future generations;

"Whereas the province of Ontario has recognized the importance of the moraine with the passage of the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act, 2001, to protect natural and water resources, preserve agricultural lands and provide clarity on where development can and cannot occur; and

"Whereas the act has resulted in certain limitations on citizens' use of their property within the moraine;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Parliament of Ontario take action to ensure there are no undue restrictions on Oak Ridges moraine residents making minor improvements to their homes and property; and

"That the province of Ontario work together with municipalities and landowners to ensure the interpretation and enforcement of the act continues to fully protect the moraine while also giving residents the right to fair and reasonable enjoyment of their property."

I'm pleased to sign this in support of my constituents in the riding of Durham.

AUDIOLOGY SERVICES

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it's entitled "Listen: Our Hearing is Important!"

"Whereas services delisted by the Harris-Eves government now exceed \$100 million in total; and

"Whereas Ontarians depend on audiologists for the provision of qualified hearing assessments and hearing aid prescriptions; and

"Whereas new Harris-Eves government policy will virtually eliminate access to publicly funded audiology assessments across vast regions of Ontario; and

"Whereas this new Harris-Eves government policy is virtually impossible to implement in underserved areas across Ontario; and

"Whereas this policy will lengthen waiting lists for patients and therefore have a detrimental effect on the health of these Ontarians;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Ontario Legislature to demand the Harris-Eves government move immediately to permanently fund audiologists directly for the provision of audiology services."

Of course I affix my signature as I am in complete agreement.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Eves government has increased the fees paid for by seniors and the most vulnerable living in our long-term-care facilities by 15% or \$7.02 per diem effective August 1, 2002; and

"Whereas this fee increase will cost seniors and our most vulnerable more than \$200 a month; and

"Whereas this increase is 11.1% above the rent increase guidelines for tenants in the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas the increase in the government's own contribution to raise the level of long-term-care services this year is less than \$2 per resident per day; and

"Whereas the increase in the government's own contribution to raise the level of long-term-care services this year is less than \$2 per resident per day; and

"Whereas according to the government's own funded study, Ontario ranks last among comparable jurisdictions in the amount of time provided to a resident for nursing and personal care; and

"Whereas the long-term-care funding partnership has been based on government accepting the responsibility to fund the care and services that residents need; and

"Whereas government needs to increase long-term-care operating funding by \$750 million over the next three years to raise the level of service for Ontario's long-term-care residents to those in Saskatchewan" back "in 1999; and

"Whereas this province has been built by seniors who should be able to live out their lives with dignity, respect and in comfort in this province;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Demand that Premier Eves reduce his 15% fee increase on seniors and the most vulnerable living in long-term-care facilities and increase provincial government support for nursing and personal care to adequate levels."

I affix my signature. I'm in complete agreement.

HUNTING IN WILDERNESS PARKS

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Minister of Natural Resources has confirmed that the province is considering allowing hunting in Ontario's wilderness parks, including Quetico, Killarney, Wabakimi and Woodland Caribou;

"Whereas the provincial government made no mention of opening up wilderness parks to hunting when it came up with the Ontario Living Legacy policy ... for a vast area of publicly owned land across northern Ontario;

"Whereas the province's wilderness parks were originally established to be sanctuaries where the forces of nature would be permitted to function freely and where visitors could travel by non-mechanized means and experience solitude, challenge and personal enjoyment of that protected area; and

"Whereas opening wilderness parks to hunters undermines the principles the parks were established to fulfill, threatens animals and exposes the public to risk;

"Therefore we, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, petition the Ontario Legislature to demand that the Ministry of Natural Resources renew and reconfirm its ban on hunting in all of Ontario's wilderness parks."

I am pleased to add my name to this petition.

VISITOR

Mr AL McDonald (Nipissing): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd like to introduce a friend of mine who drove down from the city of North Bay, a very successful businessman, Theo Margaritis.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Welcome to the Legislature.

Further petitions?

HOME CARE

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it's very short. It simply says:

"Whereas we are outraged by the community care access centre's decision to cut homemaking services to seniors in Sudbury;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"(1) Demand that the homemaking services be restored; and

"(2) Demand that Associate Minister Dan Newman accompany Rick Bartolucci, MPP for Sudbury, to Sudbury for a meeting."

Of course, I'm in agreement so I affix my signature to this petition.

OPPOSITION DAY

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Ms Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): I would like to introduce this opposition day motion:

The Legislative Assembly of Ontario directs the government to address public concerns of cronyism and patronage by releasing full details of all dealings between the Cortellucci-Montemarano group of companies and the government of Ontario, its agencies, boards and/or commissions, for public scrutiny.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The member has introduced opposition day number 4. The member for Windsor West.

Ms Pupatello: It's very important that this House have an opportunity to address this issue, which we have been raising in this House for these last two weeks.

To give the public a summary of what this issue is about, we in this House addressed the Premier of Ontario and asked him very pointed questions about a relationship between the Conservative government's largest party donor, Mario Cortellucci and his companies, and the Ontario Pension Board, which is chaired by Don Weiss, a government appointment to that chairship, an individual who before being appointed chair was executive director of the Progressive Conservative fund, the fundraising arm of the party.

1530

We've discovered since then, and introduced in this House, that when he came to committee—which he had to appear before in order to be sanctioned for this appointment and which is a majority Conservative MPP committee, so of course it was going to pass—Liberals at that committee raised concerns about that link being far too close, for an individual to be chair of the Ontario Pension Board, which is responsible for investing the pension funds of employees of the Ontario public service, having just stepped from the PC Party fundraising arm, only to discover at that committee that he in fact was

going to, for some period of time, have both positions, be both initially a board member of the pension board and continue on at the PC fund. For a period of nine months, he continued both roles. He eventually moved from being on the board of the pension board to being the chair of the pension board. In that time, some very interesting changes took place at the Ontario Pension Board where their investments were concerned.

It's interesting to note as well for the record that not only was he chair of the pension board, but he also sat on a number of committees at that pension board. He was the CEO overseeing the day-to-day operations of the fund; he was a member of the audit committee of that board, which ensures the financial probity of those decisions; a member of the investment committee of the board that scrutinized individual investments; a member of the pension policy committee, which sets the general investment policies; and a member of the human resources committee, which weighs in on the hiring of fund employees. So you see, Don Weiss is in a key, critical position and is a significant decision-maker. He's not only a decision-maker, but then sits on an audit committee to determine if those decisions were appropriate and sits on the policy-deciding committee as to how policies might change.

In fact, the policies did change. When Don Weiss arrived at the Ontario Pension Board, the policy of investment changed. It changed in the kinds of dealings and investments in property, which were typically income-generating properties they might invest in. Other pension boards do that as well: apartment buildings, land that generates income. It was stated in the annual report of the Ontario Pension Board that they've made a change to that policy. They've decided recently that they would invest in high-risk investments—very unusual. Here is a pension board that oversees a fund of some \$11 billion—certainly small compared to, say, the teachers' pension board, maybe six times as small. The teachers' pension board does not invest in these kinds of high-risk investments. But Don Weiss made this change, and the policies did change.

When those policies changed, what we realize is that they have made high-risk property investments. They didn't do it before Don Weiss got there; they have done it since. But they've only done it with one individual, and they have told us now that they've had seven property dealings of this nature with Mario Cortellucci, who is also the PC Party's largest donor. So you see, what is at question here is, is there a conflict of interest in an individual who chairs a pension board that makes decisions on how an investment fund will be invested making an arrangement with the individual who is the PCs' largest donor? Moreover, they changed the policy to allow for this kind of deal, and they've only used that kind of deal once, with one individual, and that one individual happens to be the PC Party's largest donor.

We introduced in this House the conflict-of-interest guidelines that drive the behaviour of these top civil service positions, which is what it is. Don Weiss is

guided by that public service guideline, which states that an individual will not have special privilege for his friends or for his family.

I ask this House to consider: what is considered a special privilege? Well, it's something that is not available to everyone. It's not available to me. It's not available to any other land developer in Ontario. I marvel every time the television comes on and I watch Ernie Eves talk about the economic plan for Ontario, if you want to invest in Ontario. Why does his TV ad not say, "Call the Ontario Pension Board, because have we got a deal for you. We can finance you up to 90% of the value of that land cost," 90% on the cost of land?

Well, this is what the land looks like. It's farmland, and, according to the Brampton plan, this farmland is outside the urban area for Brampton. In the plan for development of Brampton, it is not considered to be up for development until well into the year 2020; in fact, they said 2023. It could be developed 25 years from now, if it's going to be developed.

When we introduced this information in the House, Mario Cortellucci was quoted as saying that he might be able to do this in five to 10 years. If he did that, it would be against what the Brampton plan is. Is there some information that all of us in this House and perhaps the Brampton city council might want to know, in terms of the speed with which this particular land might be developed? We asked this House to consider how one land developer could access the kind of financing that he did, that makes most land developers green with envy; that they could have at 90% of the cost of that land.

We have the deals that they struck. Four were introduced in this House. Just for these four that we introduced, the land cost totalled over \$11 million. Of that \$11 million, the cash down by Cortellucci was \$1.2 million. The balance of the loan from the pension board was \$9.7 million. There was a second loan on those properties totalling \$140 million.

We asked these questions in the House. The minister stood up on his feet and tried to talk about the details of those arrangements, which are not public. The agreement that makes these loans happen is not a public document, so we can't see that what the minister is telling us is true. We asked him to table those agreements in this House. In fact, in our motion today, we asked him to table all agreements with Mario Cortellucci and the Montemarano companies in this House; dealings with the government, with its agencies, boards and commissions. The links here are clear. Don Weiss was appointed by the government. Ernie Eves was the finance minister at the time. The finance minister would be very interested in who is appointed chair of the Ontario Pension Board. Why? Because Ontario taxpayers are on the hook for those pension funds. If the pension board funds fail, the Ontario taxpayers have to cover them. They have to guarantee them for the employees. So we have a vested interest in knowing that they're making good and valuable decisions.

Are they good and valuable decisions? Well, the Ontario Pension Board has an audit process to see that

they're making smart investments. But Don Weiss sits on that committee as well, and he suggested in interviews, after we raised this issue, that they had an ad hoc committee that made this decision. Now, is that a discussion over a water cooler in the morning? Who participated in those discussions, to see this is where they should go?

Why is it that before Don Weiss was at the pension board, they did not invest in high-risk land speculation deals? Don Weiss arrives at the board; they are now investing in high-risk land speculative deals—but only with one developer. That one developer happens to be the largest donor to the PC party.

I want someone to tell me how that doesn't smell.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): It's just a coincidence, I guess.

Ms Papatello: It is too much of a coincidence.

We have a right to ask these questions and demand answers from this government. That is just too cozy. The minister suggested in this House that they will investigate to see that no laws were broken. Do you know what the conflict of interest guidelines say? The conflict of interest guidelines say you can't just follow the law; you have to be seen not to have a conflict.

There's the rub. We can't just put people in positions and hope that they do what's right, in an integrity-minded way, in the functioning of the government and in the overseeing of that pension board. It has to be seen to be at arm's length and on the basis of good decision-making and investments. What we have instead is an opportunity for only one land developer to access financing, the likes of which land developers don't see anywhere else in Ontario. Only one land developer got this kind of a deal.

How can the government actually defend this? We want to know: was Don Weiss acting in the best interests of the pension board, and therefore of the taxpayers, or was he acting in the best interests of where he was also working at the very same time as he was on the board, as a board member of the pension board, with his hand out to Mario Cortellucci?

1540

We then found that in that time period, Cortellucci had donated more than \$20,000 during a by-election that occurred there, when the law allows you to double up on your various donations to the party. While Don Weiss was out asking for money of Mario Cortellucci, he was in a position within the pension board to be making arrangements to change the policy that allows investment in high-risk speculative land deals. The first order of business, the one development that he's prepared to engage in, has to do with Mario Cortellucci, the single largest donor to the PC Party, who has donated over \$1 million to leadership candidates, to the PC Party by-election candidates, you name it. It is just too cozy.

It's a terrible saying around here to say, "It's who you know," because it's supposed to be about fair government. Government's role for all of us is that it's supposed to be fair. If that is the kind of investment that the pension board is going to be getting into, then it has to be

fair and accessible to everyone. Everyone has to have that same opportunity. Was there an ad that went out? Was there a mailing that went out to all developers that said, "Look at how much money can be available to you"? The seven land deals that they made with Mario Cortellucci, totalling under or just over \$40 million for the purchase of land—do you not think every land developer wants to have that kind of opportunity? But they didn't. Before Don Weiss arrived at the board, they didn't do that kind of deal. Don Weiss arrives and they do that kind of a deal. The only land developer to benefit from that kind of deal is Mario Cortellucci. In that same time frame, a conflict of interest was there because Don Weiss was the head of the PC fundraising arm, hand out to Mario Cortellucci for money to put in the PC coffers, at the same time his policy was changing to allow for this kind of high-risk investment.

We have an obligation to the public here. The government has an obligation when they put names forward. They can't just follow the rules; they have to be seen to follow the rules. Conflict of interest exists every day, and it should be the government's priority to be seen to have integrity, to act on these matters so that you will have integrity, so that an individual like Don Weiss cannot be appointed to such a board, because it is so sensitive in terms of what kinds of dealings happen at that board.

We have asked these questions repeatedly in this House. First, the Premier suggested there was going to be some kind of an investigation. The minister responsible for the investigation, by the time the end of the day is through, says he called his deputy minister and was assured it was fine. There you go; the deal's over. It's a drive-by review that he apparently is satisfied with. At the same time as he suggests the drive-by review is fine, the Premier is up in Barrie somewhere making some kind of an announcement and suggests I haven't seen a report yet to understand that we've unearthed all there is to unearth, and that we're satisfied with this.

We say today in this House with this motion that we insist that these deals be tabled so we can all look at them. We are, after all, responsible for all of the 11 million or 12 million people in this province who are responsible for that pension board, for those employees who are expecting a pension, and that the decisions that are being made are being made because they're good business decisions, not because you're doing something for someone who has just far too cozy a relationship with the individual that this same government appointed to head that Ontario Pension Board. That is not on. We expect a government to act with integrity. Maybe you didn't realize the kind of conflict that could exist, but when we ask these questions in this House, we expect some kind of action. I call on this government to stop this kind of conflict and act with integrity.

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): It is always a pleasure for me to rise in the House to speak to the people of Ontario about the important issues of the day that should be debated in this House. We do that every day. But I should also say that it is unfortunate that I and

my colleagues must repeatedly stand to dispel what can only be characterized as baseless rumour and innuendo.

I can respect a member who stands to debate the merits of policy. That's really why we are here. We're supposed to be debating the merit of a policy and then ultimately letting the people decide. I regret that I have not yet seen that from the members across the way in this debate. So far, I have only heard what I can call irresponsible rumours. There's no interest in the truth. There is no interest in really getting at the issues.

I need to clear the air on this and set some context for what we are really talking about here, and that is the Liberal Party's complete lack of respect for this House and what I believe is an abuse of their parliamentary privilege and immunity from libel for things said in this House.

Let's look at some of the examples from just last week. On Monday, the member for Windsor West stood in her place and said that the Ontario Pension Board loaned \$150 million to a friend of the party. She said she had legal documents that showed the Ontario public service pension plan, an arm's-length agency that makes independent investment decisions in the best interests of its members and pensioners, gave \$150 million to a friend of the party, putting taxpayers and pensioners at risk.

Let's take a closer look at that. I recall very clearly that the member for Windsor West said this was a \$150-million loan. I think most members of the House remember this quite well. This is, of course, completely wrong. First of all, this was not \$150 million; it was much less. It was \$36.3 million, to be precise. That makes a difference of more than \$113 million. That's more than four times the amount. I find that absolutely outrageous. As if this were not bad enough—and I think it's pretty bad to make an accusation that's so wildly exaggerated—the member for Windsor West did not even have enough courage to stand in her place and apologize for this. That would be bad enough. To put forward inaccurate information such as this inside or outside the House would in itself be unbecoming of an honourable member, but to do it and then fail to recognize her own mistake is inexcusable.

Of course, this is not the only area where the member across the way is wrong. When she called this a loan, I think the member knew very well that she was painting a picture which did not accurately portray what really happened here, so let me talk about this in a little more detail.

The most important thing to know is that this is not just a loan. These were mortgages against properties that independent experts hired by the pension board thought were good investments. They were investments made by an entire committee: professionals with experience in the management of pension funds and concerned only with the financial state of the fund and its ability to meet the needs of its members. I am shocked that the members opposite would even hint that these people would make decisions which they knew were unnecessarily risky or ill-conceived.

Of course, the Liberals would have us believe that the pension board was just giving money away. This is not at all the case. I recall very clearly the Chair of Management Board standing outside the Legislature talking about how these investments were structured. First in this regard is the fact that the \$36.3-million investment was spread across seven individual properties, not four, as the member would have us believe. Again, this is a fact that she has mentioned.

So what else is there about these deals that the Liberals just don't know or, worse, are deliberately ignoring? It would seem that the members opposite would like to have people believe wrongly that this was like the pension board giving away free money. Nothing could be further from the truth.

1550

I heard the Chair of Management Board tell reporters outside the House about how these investments were structured, and it makes a great deal of sense to me. The pension board makes decisions in a purely businesslike manner with whatever is in the best interests of its shareholders, the members and pensioners of the plan. Like responsible businesses, the pension board wants to make sure that its investments are protected. In order to do that, in this case they have come to agreements with the company in which they're investing to arrange for security or collateral, to make sure that if something goes wrong and the business is not able to pay the original principal, the plan's members or taxpayers do not get stuck paying for it. Part of this collateral is the land itself, which is a very common investment for pension plans. In fact, in the year before, the public service pension plan invested more than \$1 billion in real estate. This is a sound investment.

I know that many people are saying, "What if there's something wrong with the land and you can't sell it?" That's a good question, and the Chair of Management Board explained that very well too. Because the properties were—I apologize to the House for using such technical terms—cross-collateralized, the pension board would be able to use other properties to make up the difference if the value of one property should go down. In addition, the total value of the security is many times higher than the actual value of the mortgage itself, to make sure the investment is protected.

I know that the members opposite may not acknowledge that they were wrong. After all, that comes hard for any politician. I think in this case, the member for Windsor West owes pensioners of the public service pension plan, the people of Ontario, and this House an apology for so wildly exaggerating not only the actual value of the investment in question but also the risk associated with it.

I think it is truly deplorable that the members opposite would use their position to scare members of the plan into believing that the board was risking their retirement funds in high-risk ventures. I am confident that the board acted in good faith and think that it is time for the opposition to really own up to the facts of the case and

stop the smear campaign of highly respected professionals.

We all know that when investing there is no sure thing, and there are clearly some investments that involve more risk than others. It seems to me that what we should hope for is that the pension board should not preclude doing business with anyone who donated to the Progressive Conservative Party but should be concerned that members' and pensioners' money is invested in a prudent manner that obtains the greatest value for the least risk possible. It certainly seems to me that this is the case with these investments.

I appreciate the opportunity to address this motion and can only say that I find it very unfortunate to have to address such a blatantly flawed set of arguments. I know that my colleagues have a number of examples where the Liberal position so badly represents the truth of this matter, and I look forward to hearing exactly what they have to say.

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming-Cochrane): I believe the member who has just spoken has really missed the whole point of what this issue is about. The member tries to stand in her place to justify the legality of this particular transaction when we in politics understand that perception can be as damaging as reality.

In this case, the perception is extremely damaging because it doesn't, as we would say in our parlance, pass the smell test. In more direct context, this deal stinks. It stinks because it is only a part of a pattern of behaviour in dealing with Mario Cortellucci, a very successful Toronto developer, and the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario. It stinks because there's a relationship there of donations and political contributions that number over \$1 million over the last eight years. I think that if you give someone, and especially in this case a political party, \$1 million, it's really a transaction when it comes to that large an amount of money, and with that transaction, you expect something in return. And boy, has Mr Cortellucci received a lot in return. I think he has done very well, quite frankly, for his investment of \$1 million in the PCs.

His name really first came to light with regard to the Oak Ridges moraine controversy of at least two years ago, when environmental organizations in the moraine area were very concerned about the rapid development north of Toronto, east and west along that line, of a very sensitive environmental part of this province, basically, the beginning of the watershed for the GTA. They rightfully brought forward the idea that much of that area should be preserved in order to protect the valuable water resource so that the moraine, which is basically gravel, can receive all the rainfall and fill up the aquifers in our rivers and streams. When you pave all that land over, you've therefore sealed off the aquifers and they no longer can be fed by rainfall.

Through all that debate, finally the government, under extreme pressure—and some great work from many of our colleagues like Michael Colle, who walked the whole moraine to bring the point home—decided that they

would do a land swap, because many of the developers in that area had invested over the years, speculating that as Toronto grew, it would primarily grow north and that this land that was primarily purchased as raw agricultural land would eventually be developed into subdivisions and therefore become of great, great value, as has been the history for this area. When that swap happened, it became apparent that Mario Cortellucci, just a few months before, had purchased a great amount of land in that area that really had been frozen for development by the Ontario Municipal Board. Many of us were scratching our heads and wondering, "Why would a very successful and very canny developer purchase land that appeared to be frozen from development in that area?" But lo and behold, that frozen land was picked up by the government as land that would be included in the land swap. So the land Mr Cortellucci owned, which really was of relatively little value because it was frozen at this time by the Ontario Municipal Board, all of a sudden became swapped with land north of Pickering and the Seaton area that would be ready to go in a high-value area for subdivision development. Again, we all wondered, "How would Mr Cortellucci have known that this deal was going to be happening?"

As it turns out, he had developed a very close relationship with many of the members of this government. In that case, it was with Chris Hodgson, who was the author for the government of this land swap deal. Because of the land dealings in that part of the area and fundraising activities that people like Chris and Mario Cortellucci had in common, there obviously was an understanding there that this was the way the deal was to unfold and therefore, if you could obtain this land, you'd be part of this swap and you would gain tremendous value. That's what happened for Mario Cortellucci right there. So it is basically a pattern of knowledge. Somehow Mr Cortellucci had an understanding that that land deemed to be not of great value would very shortly become of extremely great value.

That brings us to the next project Mr Cortellucci was into that came to our attention, a bit of a pet project of mine because it involves a piece of land in my riding and a proposal that has been bandied about since about 1988, when the Adams and the Sherman mines, owned by Dofasco, were closed, leaving us with two large pits in the ground. A North Bay promoter and developer decided that putting garbage in the Adams mine pit near Kirkland Lake would be a great idea. There's a long history to that, and there's not time in this debate today to get into that, only to say that last September the original promoter and owner of that site encouraged and convinced a brand new partner to become a partner in the Adams mine for the sum of \$1.8 million, and that turned out to be Mario Cortellucci. In the land transaction office in Haileybury, Ontario, all we had was a numbered company. It wasn't until there was a legal dispute between Canadian Waste Services and Notre Development and Cortellucci that we understood who was actually the new owner of the Adams mine.

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Again, I get back to this trail of inside knowledge. As we knew from headlines, when three years ago a band of very dedicated activists in my area really defeated the Adams mine project, Mel Lastman, the mayor of Toronto, declared in big headlines in all the papers that the Adams mine was dead, “d-e-d, ded,” as he spelled it at the time, that there was no interest for this project. But Mario Cortellucci understood that he had a fan here in the government.

I wish I had more time to talk about all of this, and I think I will have time some other day, but we need to get on with another speaker. I would hope my colleagues will continue this tale of insider knowledge and how Mr Cortellucci has had really exclusive treatment by this government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Further debate.

Hon Doug Galt (Minister without Portfolio): I appreciate the opportunity—well, I’m not so sure I do appreciate the opportunity, because this is rather a sad state of affairs when we’re debating a topic such as this. I’ve been listening to members before me speak about this issue and cannot help but wonder how we’ve managed to stoop so low indeed here in this House. It seems terrible to me that the business of the official opposition has come to a point where they have to sling mud hoping that some of it will stick.

I was listening to question period today and thinking about what really should be asked in question period, about policy, questioning the government on its policy. There was literally nothing on policy. It was all on dirt and seeing what they could stir up, hoping they could cause some problems.

It’s a real shame that we’ve deteriorated in this House to that point that the opposition is not using their time to put forward some good ideas. I would have thought they’d be interested in talking a little bit about their platform. Obviously, from question period and opposition day, I think they’re actually embarrassed with their platform and they really don’t want to be talking about it because there’s not much to talk about. They keep their leader well hidden. They bring him out occasionally for question period, but otherwise Mr Dalton McGuinty is nowhere to be seen. They find the polls go up when that occurs, and I can understand why they would do that. Also part of me wonders if this is because they are lacking in real alternatives in terms of policy that they want to put forward to this House.

I know there are some very intelligent and bright people on the opposition benches. That is really why I’m so disappointed that they’ve chosen to pursue a topic so beneath them. Maybe I can understand part of what’s going on. They’re noticing their platform is being eroded away. They’re noticing their polling numbers are eroding away. And certainly it’s very obvious that the morale on the other side of the House is deteriorating and eroding. There’s no support for their leader. I’d have thought they’d stand up and have a little bit of support on rare

occasions for the leader, especially during question period, but I don’t see that.

Hon Dan Newman (Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Sorbara?

Hon Mr Galt: I’m not sure if it’s Mr Sorbara or Mr McGuinty, but there are others over there vying for the leadership with the knives out behind their leader. For that, I feel sorry for their leader, because having that kind of dissension in their ranks heading into an election, they’re all looking forward to who will be the leader next time after they lose in the upcoming election.

A few weeks ago, I heard a lot coming from the other side of the House about the polls. They don’t seem to be talking much about the polls just lately. Now, I haven’t seen any. I am not sure exactly where they’re at, but the fact that they’re so quiet on the opposition benches about the polls would suggest to me that maybe they’re not holding up quite as well as they’d like. That’s what happened in 1999. It’s what happened in 1995 and 1990. They were way up in the polls, and then as it came to election time, they plummeted. Now they’re pretty cocky; they’re feeling pretty good when they’re up there.

But sometimes you should have a look at the track record and see what happened. Just maybe it relates to the fact that they’re looking at Mr McGuinty’s tax increases that he’s promised: a \$4.8-billion tax increase. Can you imagine what that’s going to do to the economy of this country? It’s one thing to up the taxes, and to collect them. Probably they’ll get most of that in the first year, but with the number of industries that will be heading south of the border, with the number of jobs that will disappear, I can assure you that when it comes to the second year, that \$4.8 billion won’t be there. It’ll be long gone because the jobs won’t be here. Families won’t be supported by the income from their parents and they’ll be looking to welfare for support from the state. The welfare numbers will go up, to something like we had in 1995 where we had the highest welfare rate on a per capita basis of any jurisdiction here in Canada. With that kind of tax increase, I can assure you that’s where we’re headed.

With the tax cuts we’ve made, the average family will be saving, as of January 2004, \$2,575. That’s after tax—dollars in their pockets they can do a tremendous amount with. That has been the turnaround.

Their leader and the whole party are also committed that, if they get into power, they’re going to eliminate the education equity tax credit. People have worked very hard to send their children to Jewish schools, to Christian schools, have really scraped to be able to send them so that they’re taught values in those schools. They are going to take that tax credit away. You know what happens with that tax credit? It’s immediately put right back into investing in the country, investing in clothes for their children. It cycles some seven times, I’m told. I don’t see that ever being lost, but they do. I think it’s a shame.

They’re also committed on this tax credit we’re recognizing for seniors’ education tax. I’m so disappointed that on the opposition benches they would take that away

from seniors. That's their feeling about seniors in this province. They would not allow seniors to have, on average, \$450 or \$475 in their pocket so they can go out and spend and be able to stay in their homes just a little bit longer. That's what's going on on the opposition benches. That's mean-spirited to our seniors, that they wouldn't allow them to have the extra \$475 in their pockets. They know that the seniors in this province have been talking about the cost of education tax on their residences. Now we're going to do something about it, and they're so mean-spirited that they would take it away.

They would increase corporate taxes. They're committed to that. Imagine what's going to happen when they increase corporate taxes: they're going to head south of the border. They're certainly not going to be staying here in Ontario. They're going to go some place if corporate taxes go up. What happens when corporations go away? Jobs go with them. What happens when jobs go? They go on welfare and on unemployment insurance. That's what the Liberals of Ontario stand for. I'm so pleased they've come out clearly with a platform of standing for tax increases so that we know where they stand. I'm sure there'll be several flip-flops on that between now and election day, but currently we kind of have them nailed down. It's like nailing Jell-O to a wall, but they're nailed down in their platform that they are going to increase taxes. I can't believe they're running on that platform, but that's reality.

We're sidetracking just a little on the topic, but I couldn't help but get into some of the things—I know they're concerned about their platform because they never speak about it in the Legislature. If they would talk about it, I could understand they're committed to their platform. You go out and do polling and you ask, "Have you discussed a platform with your colleagues at work?" Eighty-six percent have discussed The Road Ahead with their colleagues. How many have discussed the Liberal platform? Zero; not a single person polled had talked about the Liberal platform. That's proof and it's pudding. Not a single soul in that poll had paid any attention to or even talked about the Liberal platform. That indicates the lack of originality and the lack of ideas to the people here in Ontario. Yet 86% of the people are prepared to talk about what's in our platform—

Hon Mr Newman: The Road Ahead.

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Hon Mr Galt: The Road Ahead, absolutely, and it's going someplace. The road ahead for the Liberals is going nowhere. I think they understand that, and that has been their concern in their ranks and why they're into the kind of questioning that we're hearing today on this opposition day. I just can't believe what we're debating.

I'll get back to my notes just for a few minutes here.

It's really a shame that they're so bereft of policy alternatives that they want to take an entire day to debate rumour and innuendo. That's really all this is. They have a whole bunch of yelling but there's very little that's substantial in this issue. It's such a shame that they have

to try and drag other people through the mud to make themselves look good.

That brings to mind that if you wrestle with a pig, both you and the pig get dirty, but only the pig enjoys it. That's sort of what's going on in this case and they seem to be enjoying this whole exercise of wrestling in the mud. I don't think too many in our ranks are enjoying that. In many ways it seems to be very similar to the schoolyard bully, whose only way of making himself feel strong is to make others look weak. It's such a shame that they don't have any more real policy alternatives to put forward to make their party look strong than to try and make others look bad. I just think that is such a shame.

This is especially true when they start talking about areas like pensions. When the members opposite come in here and start throwing around these wild accusations, all they're really doing is scaring people, and our seniors don't need to be scared. They're probably frightened enough to think that a Liberal government might happen here in Ontario. They look at what's going on in Ottawa, and that is indeed extremely frightening. I can understand why they wouldn't want the same kind of thing here in Ontario.

When the opposition comes in here and starts making these incredible accusations without any real proof to back them up, I think that's absolutely irresponsible. Let me give you an example.

The member for Windsor-West came in here last week and tried to string along a set of circumstances, trying to make it look like a conflict of interest. Let's take a look at some of the facts. Don Weiss appeared before the standing committee on government agencies, not once, but twice. He said very openly that he had worked for the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario, and he was proud of it. He was even commended for his openness by the opposition members of the committee. Prior to going to work for the Ontario Pension Board, he had a 30-year career in the financial services field and was told by the member for Scarborough-Agincourt, the critic for finance, and he doesn't do too bad a job at it, "I have no doubt about your professional credentials." These are truly the facts.

The other facts are that there are six other members on the pension board who are also responsibly taking these decisions. I hope the members opposite do not think that they would abandon their responsibility to look out for the best interests of the members and pensioners of the plan.

These board members are all well-qualified people, with diverse backgrounds and a solid understanding of the financial services field, and able to oversee the recommendations made by the funds management.

For example, William Fisher, who has recently retired, was a member of the board for the time that three of the seven investments were made. Mr Fisher served as vice-president of human resources for Chrysler Canada. During his time there, he was manager of pension saving and unemployment benefits plans. Mr Fisher was appointed by the David Peterson Liberal government.

Fact: another member of the board, Mr Hugh Mackenzie, was a member of the investment committee for the Canada Post pension plan. This plan has some 57,000 active and retired members. Mr Mackenzie is also the research director of the United Steelworkers of America and was a former research director for the New Democratic Party and principal secretary to NDP Premier Bob Rae.

These are talented professional people upon whom we rely to make decisions and look out for the best interests of the pension plan members. I think it's preposterous to say they would abandon this obligation.

The Ontario public service pension plan, which was created in the late 1980s, has a solid track record of success. With \$11.5 billion in assets, it is the seventh-largest plan in the country. It has more than 66,000 members, both active and retired. We all know how important these funds are to people, and the fact that they are guaranteed by the government makes their proper management doubly important. This has always been the case. This was most definitely the case in 1991, when the pension plan was getting started as an arm's-length agency. For those first 11 years, William Somerville was the chair of the board and provided years of excellent leadership. For many of those years, the fund saw double-digit annual increases, with good management and strong stock markets. Bill Somerville was eminently qualified to chair the pension board, just like Don Weiss is qualified to chair the pension board.

The difference, of course, is that Bill Somerville was not a Tory, nor was he appointed by a Tory. He was a Liberal and was appointed by a Liberal government. There's really no doubt about Bill Somerville's party affiliation, and there's no doubt about the fund's success. He was a member of the Liberal party, stood for election under the Liberal banner and was the chairman of the Liberal Party of Canada's fundraising in Ontario. At the same time, he oversaw a board that showed double-digit increases in the value of the plan and put it on a solid footing. From that, there's no reason to think that Bill Somerville's party affiliation coloured his judgment of investing members' funds wisely, and there should be no reason to believe that just because Don Weiss worked for the Progressive Conservative Party, his judgment would be coloured.

Again, just look at the fact that the Ontario public service pension plan was the only major public pension plan to make money in 2002, despite the fact that other plans lost an average 5.1% of their value. This was the lowest rate of return in the past 25 years. It should come as no surprise to anyone in this House that pension plans across the country had poor returns. With the stock market down, this had an obvious and immediate effect on the value of pension plans that invest heavily in equities.

As any investment adviser will probably tell you, one of the best ways to avoid market volatility is to diversify one's portfolio. It seems to make sense that this investment would be the Ontario pension board's diversifying

its real estate assets in order to reduce its risk in an uncertain market. This has all the markings of a board taking prudent measures to minimize the risk of an uncertain market, and it's unbelievable that the Liberals don't support that.

It should be painfully obvious that the circumstances put together by the Liberals only amount to innuendo. There is no evidence of wrongdoing here. In fact, the Chair of the Management Board has said repeatedly that he asked his deputy minister to look into these allegations and that she reported the processes and policies were indeed followed. I'm not even sure I can count the number of times he's said that.

But last week, immediately after he said it to the leader of the opposition, I believe the leader called it a "fly-by by a deputy minister." I was shocked to see the contempt and disregard for the professionalism and integrity of a senior civil servant that was shown by the sweeping dismissal of the Leader of the Opposition. I for one—and I would hope the rest of this House—would place greater trust in the word of a deputy minister, who says she has reviewed the case, than in speculation by the members opposite.

1620

Quite frankly, I'm disgusted by the cavalier way in which the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Windsor West toss around these serious accusations. They are spurious and, as far as I'm concerned, without basis. If the Leader of the Opposition does not trust the civil service and does not trust their integrity, he and his seatmate should stand in their place and say so. Otherwise, he should move on to issues of substance and stop this disgraceful display of partisan mudslinging.

Just in winding up and relating back to some of the comments I made earlier about the position the Ontario Liberals must be finding themselves in, with a platform that has very little substance—they're seeing the Road Ahead, which they're envious of, and now they're trying to figure out what they're going to do with their platform to bolster it so they might have a chance of making a decent showing in the upcoming election in the province of Ontario.

I appreciate the opportunity to be able to speak, although the topic we're on really doesn't measure up to what I think the Liberals of Ontario probably could have put forward and should have put forward.

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): That was a very interesting speech by the member for Northumberland. I've had a note come to me from my office, though, that several librarians have called and asked whether Hansard for today should be filed under fiction or with the regular filing. I've said it has to go with the regular one; the rules require that.

There's a very interesting movie from some years ago, called *Mr Smith Goes to Washington*. I find it interesting, and I think not just politicians but everyone would, because of the process and what Mr Smith discovered and how he went, rather naively, and learned how politics really work or how some people think politics should work.

Unfortunately, the public is very cynical about politicians, and all of us have experienced comments about crooked politicians. But that's an expression; it's not reality. I feel very privileged to be here with members on both sides of the House who did not come here to be crooked. But over the years, the public has identified two or three instances where that has happened. That puts a lot of pressure on us to demonstrate openly that everything is above-board. The public not only wants to see and believe that politicians are honest; they want to get rid of the perception that it may be otherwise, and we need to deal with that perception.

For a politician, there can be the temptation at times to think, "Boy, I have a position of power. People elected me, and I can go off to Toronto. I have power now." The reality is that we're the servants of the people. It is the exact opposite of power. I have 92,000 employers; I have 92,000 bosses in my riding. All of us have that situation. We have to make certain that we don't fall victim to the arrogance that comes with power.

From time to time, there are items we are made aware of in this House that cause me to wonder just what's going on; is power being abused somewhere?

I have seen a brand new, vacant OPP station in my community bypassed to have another one go into an abandoned warehouse in a minister's riding—in a riding doesn't have the telephone service and is on a county road rather than on Highway 401. I have to wonder what was going through someone's mind to say, "Here's the station the OPP wants, but this empty old warehouse is in a cabinet minister's riding, and it's going to go there." It's still not up and running. That was four years ago.

Interjection: Who owns it?

Mr Parsons: That's the question: who does own it?

In my role as the critic for persons with disabilities, I am fascinated by a particular property arrangement—E.C. Drury School for the Deaf in Milton—a lovely play area, a lovely little bush. The neighbours enjoyed it, but the school got tremendous use out of it. After going through the proper process, the province decided that this land was surplus and they were going to put it up for sale. The school wasn't asked; the school community wasn't consulted—neither the staff nor the parents nor the students. But this property was declared surplus. The intriguing thing on this is that the cheque for the down payment to purchase that property arrived at the ministry before the property was in fact declared surplus. I find that a fascinating arrangement that begs some questions.

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton): In your own mind, maybe.

Mr Parsons: I think in anyone's mind, one would wonder how a property can be sold before it's up for sale when it's a public property.

We are now seeing an example of some property that is eligible for a mortgage of substantial numbers of dollars. But I think if any of us were asked to advance a loan, before we loaned someone some money we would want to know about their ability to repay. This is a piece of property that is raw, unserviced land in an area that's

not slated to be developed; a risky investment at best. The question any of us would ask would be: where is the income stream going to come from that property to repay the mortgage? It's as simple as that.

If they were to invest in a shopping centre, we know there are going to be rents paid every month that will help to generate the repayments. This land will generate virtually no income for the owner over the next 20 or 25 years—no income whatsoever. So why in the world would that be a good investment? Well, if there wasn't other information known to us, we would say that is absolutely illogical for a pension board to do.

It starts to develop a bit of a picture that raises questions when we realize that the person who guided the loan was the chief fundraiser for the Progressive Conservative Party in Ontario, and the recipient of this mortgage has been the largest donor to the party. Now we say there is a strong question mark here, because on a purely financial basis, this one simply doesn't make sense. It doesn't make sense at all.

We have a number of issues here that beg an answer. If I were Mr Weiss or Mr Cortellucci, I would say, "I want the air cleared on this one. I want this laid to rest." Because if neither of them has done wrong, then surely they want that evidence to come out, surely they want everything unfolded.

This government has put things in place to make it very difficult to find the information. This is a question that must be answered, because if it does not work out, the taxpayers of Ontario are hung out to dry on this and will have to make up the pension fund.

What we're debating today isn't a lot different from when we were debating the Nutrient Management Act: both things we're dealing with smell, and this one needs to be resolved.

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): This is such a huge debate. I've been reading some notes here and trying to put my thoughts in order.

This is a debate ostensibly about Mario Cortellucci. That was the motion that was put forward. There is a great deal of information about Mr Cortellucci that has been gleaned from a variety of sources over the last couple of weeks. I think we can clearly see Mr Cortellucci's influence on this Legislature and perhaps, to a lesser extent, on the Conservative Party. We know from records that Mario Cortellucci has donated some \$923,043.36 to the Conservative Party since 1995. That is a given; that is a fact. That is an awful lot of money for one individual, either alone or through his corporations or through the corporations that he runs, to give to a political party. Over a period of some eight years, that averages out around \$125,000 per year.

We also can see that he donated \$206,648.13 to the Conservative Party leadership when that took place not quite two years ago—a year and a half ago. He donated what one would consider an extraordinary amount of money.

He has also donated, if one cares to look beyond the Conservative Party, some \$7,752.04 to the Liberals in

that same time frame. Although he is not equal-opportunity, he certainly was and is prepared to hedge his bets.
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We know from information sources and what has been said in this Legislature in the last two weeks that he is now the recipient of a \$36.3-million loan from a government agency. We know that loan has been given. Whether or not that loan is proper or improper will come out in investigations as time goes on. It is trite to say that many people who see a loan of some \$36.3 million in what can be by some people be considered extraordinary circumstances—does give people cause for concern to draw back and wonder whether or not the nearly \$1 million donated to the party or the more than \$206,000 donated to a leadership has any bearing on that decision.

We also know that Mr Cortellucci is intimately involved and is one of the fundraisers and stockholders in a group that is attempting to develop the Adams mine. We know that they are attempting to purchase some 840 hectares—for those who went to school in my time of life, that's about 2,100 acres—and that they're purporting to pay some \$48,000, or \$22 an acre, for buying land around the Adams mine site. That is being discussed by members of the government through various agencies. Twenty-two dollars an acre is probably amongst the smallest payments per acre for any land in the province of Ontario that has been sold in recent years. This is going back to the value of land at the turn of the century, when people often in those days paid \$20 an acre for farmland. This is land surrounding what potentially could be a very valuable site, given the right circumstances, that is being sold at \$22 an acre. One has to draw back and ask oneself the same question: does this have anything to do with the \$1 million donated since 1995 or the \$206,000 given in the leadership?

We also know that there are some other problems related to Mario Cortellucci. We know that money may have been given through various sources to individual riding associations. The Toronto Star, which I'm sure is the favourite organ and paper of the Conservative members opposite, ran quite a story on May 24 about donation-laundering. They talked about \$1 million, both in 1999 and 2000, being laundered through riding associations of the Conservative Party, from the main party to the riding associations and back to the main party, in order to get around the strict interpretation of the Elections Finances Act.

We also know that the Liberal Party did much the same thing, although on a much-reduced scale, at some \$72,000 per year in those same years.

We know that Mr Cortellucci was involved with the Northumberland Progressive Conservative Riding Association through Barrick Corp, in which he also plays a part. I'm not sure what was exactly involved there. This was just one of the examples cited in the Toronto Star of money-laundering.

We then come into what I think has been a little bit naïve on the part of the Liberal Party, talking about the scandals of Mario Cortellucci. For those who have been

around government, or around the newspaper business, or who have long memories, this is much the same thing that happened unfortunately to the Liberal Party in the late 1980s. One need only to go back to see almost the same kind of scenario unfolding with names like Patti Starr, who spent some time in jail, wrote a very entertaining book about her involvement and how she got caught up in all of this—I commend it to anybody who hasn't read it; Marco Muzzo, who is still around; the DelZotto family; and the ruined careers of Chaviva Hošek, Lily Munro and Gordon Ashworth, who now seems to have been resurrected and is back on the Liberal campaign team.

This is what people get a little bit upset about in politics: when aspersions are cast, as aspersions have been cast in this Legislature in the last couple of weeks, fingers start to point in many directions. The problem is not that these donations are being made; the problem is that the law allows them to be made. When those donations are made, unfettered and unchecked, then it is bound from time to time to cause governments a great deal of difficulty.

The public is constantly annoyed by these scandals, be they in Ontario, in the federal government or in other provinces. The public is annoyed because they believe that politicians can be bought. I want to tell you I do not believe, in my heart of hearts, that most politicians can be bought. I don't believe that most of them are for sale. What I do believe is that when one can run a direct line between contributions, as we have in the case of Mr Cortellucci, as we had in the case of the DelZotto family, or Marco Muzzo, or in Patti Starr, when one can take those and see direct government actions or indirect government actions that benefit people, it taints this legislative process.

The public is annoyed. They expect and demand integrity from their politicians. They expect and demand that politicians are above the taking of monies, above the giving of favours. They expect that politicians will do that which is right for all the people in their jurisdictions.

The difficulty we have here in the province is meted out 480 times, I would suggest, in all of our municipalities around Ontario. I looked at the election expenses of some of my former colleagues in Toronto the last time around. It was kind of interesting to see where my colleagues got their money, where the money came from to run city of Toronto campaigns, which are now the most expensive municipal campaigns of any city of any county of any region in all of Canada.

They are expensive because municipal politicians in Toronto now represent, on average, 55,000 people, and the amount of money that can be spent, by statute of this province, is in the \$30,000 or \$35,000 range for each and every one of them. The amount of money that can be collected is set at \$750 for municipal politicians seeking councillor seats and \$2,000 for someone seeking a mayoral seat. We will see that they have collected inordinate and huge amounts of money. You can go down the 44 elected councillors in the city of Toronto, and you

will note that of those 44, 12 of them got more than 75% of their money from corporations—that is, corporations that ponied up \$750 usually to give to a municipal politician so that they could run a race. You will see that that is a huge amount. The champion in the last election, who is not seeking re-election this time, is Betty Desiro, who quite clearly got 91% of all her money from corporations.

We can also see, though, that Toronto is not alone. I would invite members of all sides of this House to look at other cities. In the city of Vaughan, which the former and now deceased mayor used to like to call the city above Toronto, municipal politicians get almost all of their money from corporations: 91% of all the money raised to run municipal campaigns in the city of Vaughan was taken from corporations. The most serious part of that: 68% of the money raised by municipal politicians in the city of Vaughan came from real estate developers.

What we have here today that we're describing—\$36.3 million on real estate deals—is meted out every day across this province in municipalities large and small, in this House and perhaps, I would suggest, in other provinces, save and except Quebec and Manitoba.

We now have a circumstance where Ontario has an opportunity to act, to change, where we don't have to be pointing fingers at each other: "You're in the hands of this developer," and, "No, you're in the hands of that developer." It goes by, I suppose, every change of government as to who is doing what.

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It is quite clear we have an opportunity to change. I would suggest we look no further than what is happening in the federal government. I know, and I would suggest to all of you, that Jean Chrétien is not everybody's favourite Prime Minister, that he has done some good things and some bad things, just like most other politicians, but I would commend him, quite frankly, for doing one thing right in his last few months in office, and that is his attempt to reform political donations so that politicians will no longer have the problem we have here today, will no longer have fingers pointed at them.

He is attempting to limit donations to a couple of thousand dollars per corporation and he is attempting to make sure that individuals give the overwhelming bulk of the money to any registered political party. Money is going to have to be made up, there is no doubt, and we have seen in the last couple of days some movement around how much the taxpayer will end up subsidizing political parties. There are some who do not like this idea, but I would suggest to all of you that it is preferable to have an open, clean and honest system that the citizens themselves, that individuals finance, rather than the spectacle we are seeing here in this House of fingers pointing, of, "How much money did Mr Cortellucci give to the party and what is he getting in return?" and the retorts opposite of, "How much happened when you were in government? Does the name Patti Starr mean anything to you?" That is what we have been reduced to because we are reliant and continue to be reliant on corporate or union donations.

Two provinces have taken a lead on this. The first was Quebec. Since 1976 they have made it impossible for corporate and union donations at all, I think. You just can't do it. The money must be taken directly from individuals. I see what happened in the election Quebec just finished. In the year 2000, the Liberal Party of Quebec went around the province on a rubber-chicken circuit, having people donate to the party, paying \$100 or \$200 to have dinner with the candidates, with the leader, doing whatever. They had 200 fundraisers to raise the money.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): Bob Rae: \$1,000 a head.

Mr Prue: I'm trying to commend the Liberals of Quebec. It was a great thing they did. They held 200 of those in the same year the Conservative Party of Ontario held 22 to raise funds, and, by the way, raised more in 22 fundraising dinners because they charged a whole lot more than the Liberal Party in Quebec did in 200.

What they did in Quebec was the right thing. They limited the amount one could give and, at the same time, reached out to all of those people who may have wished to donate and invited them to participate in the political process. It was a good thing to have done. It excluded corporations; it excluded unions.

Manitoba has followed suit. We just witnessed in Manitoba last week a rather unusual election, not an election with all the TV commercials blasting both sides, but an election where people went out with pamphlets and knocked on doors and explained party policy, and they voted for a government and an opposition and a member they wanted, based on real politics, not based on who could raise the most money, not based on who could be beholden, and I am sure not based on what kind of land deal could be arranged after, or what one might surmise as a land deal being arranged after the fact.

We have a circumstance here in Ontario where the corporations may not run candidates, where they may not participate in any part of the political process, save and except donations. When they do that, they quite literally hold the attention of the political parties. People in this province are not, I would suggest, conspiracists; they do not see conspiracy around every corner. But I will tell you that when they start to see these facts come out day after day, then you start to see editorial opinion that once scoffed at the whole idea of Cortellucci—even in newspapers like the Toronto Sun, are starting to suggest that maybe some investigation needs to be done. Corporations should not be involved. They do not go to their shareholders. I would ask you to name a single corporation that has made a political contribution to any party that ever went to their shareholders to ask permission. It does not happen. They simply make an executive or corporate decision and the money flows. That money may be as small as several thousand dollars or, in the case of Mr Cortellucci, \$1 million over some eight years, but it simply flows.

I looked at the Conservative agenda, the Road Ahead, and I noticed that they want to put restrictions on unions.

Well, you need not do it if we ban everything except individual contributions. I'm suggesting that's the way to go. They want to put a ban on unions without putting a ban on corporations. To begin with, I would suggest that you've got it backwards, first of all, because the unions must go to their members in order to have the monies released. They do not have the same powers as a corporation to make it with a board of directors; it must be made at a union meeting. I would suggest it is done with the concurrence of the members who choose to be present. But be that as it may, if members opposite are going to insist on doing that to unions, you should also insist, at a very minimum, on doing that to corporations, so that no money can be given by corporations save and except if at the annual general membership meeting of the corporation the members present vote to do so. That would be a pretty brave thing to do and a wise thing to do.

Corporations are also able to hide behind numbered companies. It is very difficult to find out who is making donations to political parties or what they are expecting in return with all of the numbered companies that are out there and with the costs associated with running them and the individuals involved in them down to see who is in fact making the donations. It is quite difficult, not only in this province but in municipalities, and a real eye-opener to go down and see some of my former colleagues at the city of Toronto receiving \$750 from company XYZ1123573—just to use a number, a euphemism out of the air. But you will see all those numbered companies and \$750 beside them. That causes ordinary people to question the integrity of our democratic structure, and it's something that must change.

We also have the whole problem of donation downloading. I've described briefly before what happens, but to say it again, it's where money is given by corporations which is in turn laundered through the local riding association and given back to the main party. The Conservative Party has done that to the tune of about \$1 million a year in 1999 and 2000. The Liberal Party has done it to a much lesser extent, some \$72,000 a year, according to party president Mr Wong, who says he's only following the rules.

It comes down to the final bet. It comes down to: what confidence do the people of this province have in their political representation, their political structures, when they believe that politicians can be, if not bought, at least influenced in matters of key public policy? Do people out there reading newspapers believe that Mr Cortellucci got an unfair advantage in \$36.3 million because of his \$1 million in donations? Do they believe that politicians, in accepting money at times of elections, are actually influenced? I would suggest they are starting to do so. One need only look at the declining levels of interest in all of our political structures in this country. We will see today that elections in Canada that used to have 80% and 85% voter turnouts are now down in the high 60s. We will see today in Ontario that elections that used to be at 70% and 75% of the vote are now in the low 50s. We will see

today in municipalities that elections that used to garner turnouts of 50% or 60% are now in the low 30s. People are turned off the system. They no longer believe that their vote counts. They no longer believe that the small amounts of money that they might be prepared to donate have any influence on the election of the people of their choice. They believe that big money, corporate money, speaks with advertising. It is time to change all of that.

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It is time for us to get a different mindset so that we are not asking questions about Cortellucci. It is time to get a different mindset so that we are asking the real questions of how this province is to be run, who is going to speak for the people, and to put integrity back into the political process. I believe with all my heart that it can be done, that people of goodwill who simply have to cut themselves off from those big corporate bucks can make a real difference. I commend the federal government for taking that initiative. I wish that's what we were debating here in this House today instead of whether Mr Cortellucci gave the money or didn't, or whether there was influence. We should be debating ways to make sure that kind of process cannot happen. It would restore the integrity of this office.

I'm not trying to attack the Conservatives alone or the Liberals or even my own party, although we get very few corporate donations. The reality is that the NDP gets about 4% of its total monies from corporate donations, 81% from individuals and the balance from unions—about 15%. That's where we get our money. We know that the Conservatives get a good deal of their money from individuals. We know, for example, that they get about 45% of their money from individuals, 55% from corporations and less than 1% from unions. We know the Liberals get 55% of their money from individuals, 38% from corporations and 7% from unions. We all draw from the same pot, and that is the people, the corporations and the unions of this province. But it does not help the political process in which we are elected.

Really, the only way to do it is as Quebec and Manitoba have done it and as the federal government is now suggesting it be done in Canada. We have a need for reform, and I would suggest that the first reform should be financial reform. We need to ensure that ordinary people have control over the political process, that donations are cut down to manageable levels. We do not need to adopt a system like that in the United States, where, I might add, fewer than 50% of the people voted for the most powerful political force on the face of this planet, the President of the United States. Less than 50% of the people exercised their franchise, and the President of the United States was elected by a tiny margin of chads in Florida. We do not need a system where hundreds of millions of dollars are spent on attack advertising, one party against the other, about how someone had voted 15 years ago on some arcane issue. Unfortunately, the kinds of things we are starting—

Mr Duncan: When did Patti Starr happen?

Mr Prue: In 1989, I believe.

Mr Duncan: So 14 years ago.

Mr Prue: Well, we don't need that. That's what I'm telling you. That's what is going back and forth here. We don't need that. You don't need it; I don't need it; the Conservatives don't need it. No one needs that.

We need to get a system where there is integrity in the process, and that integrity must start with financing. Never again should someone be allowed to ask whether or not a Mr Cortellucci is getting some kind of freebie from the government because of his donations. That does not happen in Manitoba or Quebec. The scandals, if there are any scandals, are not of that nature. That's what we need to do. I would suggest we also need to look at our elections and spending practices and get back to a kinder and simpler time, when people went out and knocked on doors and put up signs. We need to get away from the kind of advertising that keeps going around our media, the kind of advertising that I unfortunately saw in the last couple of elections which was very negative. I think that kind of advertising cost Kim Campbell dearly in the federal election, when it attacked Jean Chrétien because he once had Bell's palsy. That's the kind of thing we don't want to see. We look at the United States and we say, "That can't happen here," but we see it creep in. We need to make sure that election spending is on ideas and people and not on attack ads.

We need a whole system of proportional representation so that when somebody goes out to vote, they know their vote counts. They don't stay home because they think the incumbent in their riding is a shoo-in, that there's no chance of defeating him or her. They need to know that, wherever they live in this province, their vote counts for something.

In Beaches-East York even the Conservatives need to come out and vote if they want Conservatives, knowing full well there's probably not a chance of electing one; let's be real. The same holds true for New Democrats probably in Northumberland and the same thing probably holds true for Liberals in many ridings where they just don't win. But people need to know that their vote counts for something. A system of proportional representation or of some system akin to it that is used in New Zealand or Australia—that is used literally everywhere in the world other than Canada, the United States and Great Britain—needs to be adopted to allow ordinary people an opportunity to feel that the political process belongs to them.

We need a change in legislative committees. We need people to feel that they are welcome to come here, to address the legislative committees and to actually have input to changes in legislation. So many pieces of legislation come before this House without any committee hearings. Even if there are committee hearings that are held only in Toronto, the time frame makes it impossible for ordinary people to participate. We have to get back to the people. If we do that, I suggest to everyone here that we can get away from the name-calling, from the finger-pointing, from the Cortelluccis, from the Patti Starrs, from whoever is supposedly getting some kind of government largesse for their donations.

That is what the issue is about today. That is what we need to do today. I don't know where this motion is going. I have a pretty good idea, given the government majority, that it's not going to pass. Maybe it should, maybe it shouldn't; I don't know. But what I do know is that we demean all of us when we argue in this way. What we should be doing is working for a solution and not pointing fingers.

Mr Chudleigh: I'm very pleased to join this debate about what I believe is one of the most overblown and exaggerated issues that the Liberals have raised in quite some time. Of course, this is the silly season; we're getting ready for an election. In the political area, we think coming in—

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): Which day?

Mr Chudleigh: You could probably figure out which day it might be. I think your next election, member, is probably far more definable than our next election. I think you know when that might be. Congratulations and very good luck in that. I wish you all the very best.

It's a true testament to a party that is so desperate to win the next election that they'll stop at almost nothing, including a deliberate smear campaign of very honourable people, people like Don Weiss, in order to achieve their electoral victory, which disappoints me.

I have paid close attention to the debate that has raged about the Ontario Pension Board's investment in real estate mortgages over the past week or so, and I have come to a few conclusions.

First conclusion: the Liberals don't quite have their facts straight. My colleague began the debate for our party by noting how the member for Windsor West—the member for Purolator, as we call her—overestimated, and continued to do so in a press release last Friday, the amount of the pension board money invested in mortgages. She overestimated it about fourfold. I'm not sure if they're doing this deliberately or if they just don't quite understand yet that the amount of money invested by the pension board is \$36.3 million, not the \$150 million-plus that they've been talking about. I have no idea where they came up with this number, but this certainly is Liberal fuzzy math at its best. Either that, or it's one heck of a rounding error. Liberals tend to do that.

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However, in our history of tax cuts in this party, we don't make those rounding errors. We understand how taxpayer dollars flow into the coffers of government and how to spend those dollars appropriately and accurately, using the best interests of taxpayers at every turn.

Our tax cuts have created new jobs, over a million new jobs in Ontario since we've been elected, and every single one of them has created a new taxpayer. Those new taxpayers have created new revenue for government. That new revenue for government has allowed us to reinvest in things like health care, education, environment, highways and things that Ontarians expect that their government would invest in.

The second thing I've noted is that the Liberals pay no attention to what has happened in the past. They seem to

think that unless you are a complete stranger, there should be no investment in any form of government, arm's length or not, since that would be a conflict of interest.

The third conclusion: the Liberals have absolutely no clue what it means for there to be a precedent, nor can they calculate greater than or less than with decimal places. I want to talk about this point for a moment and then I'll tell you about my other conclusions. Both Dalton McGuinty and Sandra Pupatello have called the pension board's investment in real estate mortgages "unprecedented." To support this argument, they've both said that this is a very unusual practice for pension funds and that there was a drastic change in policy to allow this since the time Mr Weiss began there. Both are absolutely and completely wrong, and I believe they know it.

When the Ontario Pension Board invested \$36.3 million in real estate mortgages, this was indeed the first time they had done so, but that's anything but a change in policy. You see, policies are the rules that are written down on paper. Those are the things that are designed to guide behaviour. For the Ontario Pension Board, the policy that has allowed them to invest in real estate mortgages has been in place since 1991. It came into place under the NDP government of that day. The fact that they invested in mortgages is no more a change in policy now than it was in 1994, when the board actually decided to invest in real estate for the first time, and that was also under an NDP government. In 2002, the Ontario public service pension plan held more than \$1 billion in real estate assets.

Other pension plans also hold real estate directly or in mortgages, including the Canada pension plan. After all, real estate is, has been and continues to be, I believe, a great investment in Ontario, along with investments in bonds, stocks, GICs or T-bills, investment vehicles that all Ontarians can take advantage of.

The opposition certainly will not let the truth get in the way of a good argument. They have told this House that it is very unusual for a pension fund to invest in mortgages. Let's talk about that for a moment. The \$36.3 million that the pension board invested in these mortgages comes to about one third of 1% of its total assets. Again, that's \$36.3 million, not the grossly exaggerated \$150 million or so that the Liberals would have you believe. At the same time, the pension fund holds about \$11.5 billion in assets, so in terms of mortgages as a percentage of the fund's total portfolio, this works out to be a third of 1%.

What does this work out to in comparison to the rest of the country? According to Benefits Canada's review of the top 100 pension funds in Canada, about 1.7% of pension fund assets are invested in mortgages—1.7% as an average across Canada. If that's not a good enough comparison, that works out to a whopping \$8 billion in pension funds invested in mortgages. I know that's not something the members opposite want to hear, but that also is the truth.

I say to the members opposite that this is not an unusual practice. My colleagues have talked about this

already but I think it's worth repeating: the Liberals just don't have their facts straight. They were wrong about the total amount of money invested, they were wrong about the amount of money invested in mortgages, and most of all they were wrong to be putting out such unfounded allegations about people's pensions. This is purely fearmongering and it is below the good conduct we have come to expect from all honourable members in this House.

There is something else that bothers me about how the Liberals are trying to spin this issue. Both in this and other issues, their implication is that neither the government nor any of its agencies, boards or commissions can have a pre-established connection with any other suppliers, vendors, friends, associates, customers, clients, casual acquaintances or confidantes, or it would be a conflict of interest, and that is simply ridiculous.

I agree there should be a high standard for the use of public funds—the very highest of standards. This government's record is solid and unquestionable in that regard. The Balanced Budget Act, the Taxpayer Protection Act, the Accountability for Expenses Act are all real examples of the measures this government has taken to bring more transparency to government and the use of hard-earned taxpayers' dollars. In addition to that, published business plans, salary disclosure and movement to a new accounting system are all tangible ways we have acted on our promise to give taxpayers more insight into how their government is run.

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): Oh, yes.

Mr Chudleigh: Yes, indeed.

However, I think the Liberals have taken this to a new extreme. No longer is there a sense of reasonableness or balance to this need. Instead, it is a plain, old-fashioned witch hunt. In the end, I think this sets a bar so high that no one could possibly get over it because there is no one, let alone any large organization, that could possibly get past the Liberal conspiracy theorists.

At some point, this will be to the real detriment of taxpayers because few people or vendors will be willing to undertake the burdensome and grossly inefficient system of declaring conflicts, no matter how minor or real. I really believe this will then have a negative effect on ministries and their agencies, boards or commissions being able to find an acceptable candidate who cannot only do the job, but profess complete and utter dissociation to any government party.

Let's take this pension board issue as an example. The fact Don Weiss was a Tory supporter is clear. He said so when he appeared before the standing committee on government agencies. The Liberals acknowledged his excellent credentials, and they still voted against him. They said he was very forthright, and still voted against him. Not once did the opposition question his experience, and yet they still voted against him. The only thing they were concerned about was his party affiliation, and that was enough to vote against him.

This is simply unreasonable. It is no more justifiable to exclude someone based on their affiliation with a

political party than it is to appoint someone because of it. This is a real weakness in the Liberal approach. They're only concerned about whether or not you belong to the wrong party.

Take Mr Crozier, the member for Essex, for example. When Mr Weiss appeared before the committee in order to qualify for this appointment, Mr Crozier did his Joe McCarthy imitation and said, "Are you now or have you ever been a member of the Progressive Conservative Party?" I know he was partly trying to be funny, and that's fair enough. Lord knows, spending time in committee, you need some humour in those places. But it really makes the point that this is their fundamental focus. It would have been one thing if Mr Weiss was unqualified, but after a 30-year career in financial services he is extremely qualified. Even Mr Phillips from Scarborough-Agincourt over there recognized that.

We are a little different about it, though. We appoint the best people for the job. We reappointed a known Liberal, Bill Somerville, as the chair of the pension board. He's an unabashed Liberal and we reappointed him because he was the best person for the job, just as Don Weiss is the best person for the job now. Mr Somerville clearly did a good job when he was chair of that pension board. Witness the growth in the plan's value. By the same token, Mr Weiss is doing a good job, witnessed by the fact it was the only major public pension plan to report a gain last year. Thank you, Mr Weiss.

It is simply not right for any person to be excluded from something just because they support the wrong political party. We should measure by results, and we are clearly doing that.

I regret that we have to take the valuable time of this House to debate such spurious accusations, but I guess this is, after all, an opposition day. I just wish there more substantial issues we could debate at this time instead of debating over rumour, innuendo and very questionable facts in the matter. There are really important issues that this House should be debating, and I think it's time we got on with it. The people of Ontario want it, they demand it, they deserve it and I think they should get it. We should be moving on with much more meaningful debate in this House.

1710

Ms Di Cocco: It's a pleasure for me to rise and speak to the motion of my colleague from Windsor West, Sandra Pupatello. I'm pleased to rise to speak to the motion because this motion is about my profound belief that there is no greater privilege than to serve the public interest as an elected member of this provincial Legislature.

But with that privilege comes a great depth of responsibility, and the depth of responsibility becomes greater with the degree of power that one wields as government. It saddens me profoundly when in our democratic responsibility to hold this government to account and scrutiny, we uncover that power has been abused over and over.

The government, more importantly, is entrusted with the people's money. It spends and is responsible for billions of taxpayers' dollars. So why is it so difficult in this House to raise the bar of integrity and ethical conduct? There has been a litany of Tory mismanagement and arrogance of power, as witnessed by a budget that was read outside the Legislature and the spending of \$36 billion that was approved by special warrant, the largest amount of money, we believe, approved by special warrant in a parliamentary democracy.

It is this litany of actions that characterizes arrogance and abuse of power, and it continues in this saga of a primary fundraiser of the Conservatives, Donald Weiss, becoming a director of the Ontario Pension Board and then this board giving the developer Mario Cortellucci millions of dollars in loans for speculative land. This has been the only loan of this type by this board. There has been no loan of this nature before or since. Again, Mr Cortellucci is the largest donor to the Progressive Conservative Party in Ontario, and Mr Weiss happens to be the head of a pension fund. This type of conduct is wrong, and as members of this Legislature, it is our responsibility to expose it and to stop this abuse.

Unfortunately, we have in this House a Premier and a head of Management Board whose job, it appears, is to justify this kind of action. Where is the backbone and the courage to do the right thing for a change? Unfortunately, this type of behaviour seems to have become a characteristic of this government. By the way, it saddens me because it's this type of behaviour and these types of actions that really debase all of us as members of this House, because actions speak louder than words. You cannot tell the public that there has been a process in place and that everything is fine, when in fact I believe that this type of cronyism, if you want to call it that, this conflict of interest, is justified as if there is an entitlement to this type of activity. It is just plain wrong, and the members of the House know that. But again, we have a Premier who believes that this is OK. It's OK to be part of this old boys' club, if you want to call it that. You scratch my back, I'll scratch yours. It's a given, and it's wrong and it has to stop. I'm hoping the public will understand that the standards have been lowered in this House, unfortunately, and that has to change.

I feel very strongly about this issue. The reason I am an MPP today is because there was a very similar land deal that took place in my riding whereby people in positions of power spent millions of dollars of taxpayers' money to line their own pockets or to give favours because of their positions of power, and it's wrong.

The public has become cynical about politicians because these types of situations are there again and again. As soon as people have become comfortable with power, they forget why they're there.

I say to the members in this House that it is important that the Premier show leadership and stop and call this what it is. It is a blatant conflict of interest and it has to stop.

Mr Christopherson: I do appreciate the opportunity to join in the discussion, building on the comments of my

colleague from Beaches-East York. You can expect that the NDP caucus will be supporting this.

I want to pick up where Michael Prue left off in terms of raising the fact that in his opinion we'd be a lot better off here if we were actually debating similar legislation that now finds itself in the federal House of Commons, and that is to say, from here on in, there's a ban on political contributions by corporations and unions.

If you take a look at existing legislation, public boards and agencies are already forbidden from participating. There are a lot of things in the past that were accepted as just a matter of routine business in terms of money and politics, and the last bit left—albeit probably the largest bit—is to say that if we're truly going to keep democracy about issues, about governance, about people having the franchise to choose, and not being about who can collect the most amount of money so they can run the most amount of ads, then we need to get corporate contributions and union contributions out of the equation.

As someone looking at running in the next municipal election in Hamilton, I wish that was the rule there, because one of the things it does is it equalizes everybody. It says that as many individuals as you can get to contribute will determine the amount of money you've got to run a campaign. That would be a reflection of the support you have if the measurement is votes; votes equating obviously to individual people.

But the person who becomes the de facto or unofficial candidate of the chamber of commerce in my community and every other community has a huge advantage because it's nothing for most corporations—I won't say all because there are a lot of small operations where \$750 would matter—in the main, to cut a cheque for \$750. If you've got a nice long list of enough corporations and word goes through the system—albeit unofficially, because the chamber of commerce in Hamilton does not endorse candidates and I suspect that might be the case right across the province, but I don't know. Nonetheless, there's an unofficial network. All you have to do, at least in Hamilton, is take a look at past elections, take a look at what the public assumptions were based on in terms of who has this unofficial endorsement of the chamber of commerce and who doesn't, and then quickly take a look at two things: who has won those elections and who has paid for them.

1720

You can argue that someone like me, coming from the labour movement, could turn to their friends in labour to offset that, but that's so polarizing. You know what? There are a lot of unions that may want to contribute to other candidates. I guess there are some corporations that would want to contribute—wouldn't it be a whole lot easier if none of that counted, none of it: the union money doesn't count; the corporate money doesn't count; the only things that matter are individuals? Even then, if you've got a lot of wealthy friends, if you come from a wealthy family or you travel in wealthy circles, it's still a whole lot easier but at least it's a levelling. There's already a max of \$750,000. It would be a lot easier for

me if I'd been raised in a wealthy family and had a lot of wealthy friends. Then they could cut \$750,000 cheques that don't mean much to them because they have enough money that that's not a big deal.

But I don't expect that in one piece of legislation, any jurisdiction, whether it's a province or the feds, can suddenly make everything perfect. It's an imperfect system—step by step we do the best we can as parliamentarians, based on experience and the needs of the public and our own personal value system—that we will eventually get to, as good and as pure a system as is humanly possible. A huge step in that regard would be what the feds are proposing.

I know as well as anybody in this place the immediate reaction to the idea that there would be more public money involved, because the average person sits back and says, "Why should my taxes pay for somebody else's campaign?" Again the imperfection of all systems comes to light. But it's a whole lot better and a whole lot more above-board and transparent if we expand a fundamental principle that we already have, which is that there are public funds available.

I want to say very clearly that Prime Minister Chrétien, in many quarters in the nation not exactly the most popular figure, is doing the right thing and I respect him for taking on, in many cases, his own party. They're not very happy. I think the president of the federal Liberal Party executive said something to the extent that this was as dumb as a bag of hammers.

Mr Prue: Stephen LeDrew.

Mr Christopherson: Stephen LeDrew, I'm advised by my friend from Beaches-East York.

So it's not easy, it's not popular, but he's doing the right thing. As Mr Prue has pointed out, they've already done it in Manitoba and Quebec. So it's not like the whole system collapses.

Money and politics: the closer the two come together, the more the public needs to worry. That's a reality. If we remove the element of corporate contributions and union contributions—let me just say too that it really is a bit much for this government, the Ernie Eves government, to be proposing changes in one part. Come on. I'm not in the next race, so this affects me not a whit. But I have to tell you that nobody in this province is going to think for one moment that it's fair that you want to propose—you're not banning, outright, unions from contributing, but what you're going to do is build in enough hurdles that it becomes a much bigger deal and a lot more difficult, if you will, and do nothing on the corporate side. I mean, come along; people are not stupid. You insult them by suggesting that somehow your changing one aspect of the formula is suddenly going to give us democracy. That really is insulting. What we need is a recognition that the less corporate money, and by extension union money, institutional money, plays a role, the better, the healthier our democracy.

Again I use Hamilton because it's the example, naturally, that I know best: my hometown. With the new formula—and this won't sound like a lot to our members

from Toronto, but I suspect that a whole lot of other members will recognize this is a whack of money—the limit to run for the mayor of Hamilton is now over \$300,000. Again, in the context of this place and billions of dollars—in Toronto I think their limit is a couple of million dollars. Mind you, they can make—what is it? Do you know?

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): It's \$1,150,000.

Mr Christopherson: It's \$1,150,000, Mr Smitherman advises me. But I understand too that you can make a single contribution of \$2,500 to the mayor's campaign, as opposed to the \$750.

My point is that for most of us in this place, the idea of raising over \$300,000 is daunting. There is that whole argument that the more we price campaigns out of the reach of ordinary people, the less the ordinary people who are franchised would have an opportunity to participate in an election.

I can remember the first time I ran back in 1984. I ran federally in Hamilton East. We had someone visiting from the United States drop by the campaign headquarters. He was involved as a local political activist at the state level in the US. We got to chatting and we had a quick coffee between events, and he asked me what my background was. I told him, and he said, "Well, where's your connection to the elites of society?"

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): And then you told him.

Mr Christopherson: And then I told him, as my House leader points out. I said, "I don't really have one. The only connection here is that I'm a citizen, I'm active in politics, I belong to my political party, I'm going to carry the flag and run in this election, and I'm going to do everything I can to try to win."

I didn't win; I came in second. But that really is beside the point. What he was interested in was how someone like me could possibly get even remotely close to a federal seat. You see, down in the United States they've allowed this to get away from them.

I was looking at a clipping the other day. The current mayor of New York—\$60 million; six zero million dollars.

Mr Prue: US.

Mr Christopherson: US dollars, I'm reminded. That's huge.

So when I told this visitor from the United States that an ordinary person like me can get elected, certainly as a candidate, and stands a chance of being elected as an MP—obviously, I ultimately became an MPP—he was amazed, and he thought it was great. His culture was such that unless you have those family connections and unless you have wealthy friends—and by this I'm talking big money—you can't even afford the price of entry. You can't even sit down in that political poker game, because you can't afford the ante, let alone the betting.

So we have something we should cherish, and that is a democracy that so far, by and large, still allows most people within society the opportunity to put their name

forward and have a reasonable chance of being elected based on the issues they're running on, the ideas they have and how they're perceived as individuals, not on whether they have the multi-millions of dollars that it costs to get in the game. This is why I, as one member, was so upset when this government changed the rules about our provincial elections. You shortened the time, and the reason for that was that you want campaigns that happen in the advertising world. The more advertising you do—the more TV advertising—the better your chances. You want to deny other parties who have to do things more door-to-door and need a lot more time to get their message out—you want to shorten or limit their ability to do that, and you shortened the campaign time.

By the way, those were the first changes ever to the rules for elections and the financing of said elections where there wasn't all-three-party agreement. Never before in the history of this province—and for 42 years, that was Tories—did any government bring in a piece of legislation that would change the rules and the financing of elections without the agreement of all three parties in the House. This government did that, and they did that because they know they can raise more money—and I'm not saying improperly or anything like that, but I am pointing out that you have the ability, because of the worlds that you travel in, the friends that you have, and the people you represent, you have the ability and you've proven it, to raise more multiple millions of dollars—certainly more than both the other two parties. So the rules that are geared to benefiting those who have big bags of money make sense. It makes sense that you brought those changes in.

1730

To bring us back to the case in front of us, there are enough questions around this that the only thing for the government to do is provide for an open, transparent, clear process for having this looked at. But more importantly, I hope all three parties in the upcoming election will commit themselves to the kind of reform that the leader of the NDP, Howard Hampton, has come forward with. I'm not sure about the Liberals. I'm looking over now and seeing "yes" for some reform. I don't know to what degree. Are you banning corporate and union?

Interjection.

Mr Christopherson: Now I'm getting—they were looking at the whole thing. OK. Fair enough. I didn't mean to turn this into a debate between us. I'm just trying to point out that we would all be well-served, those of us who are going to be citizens in the next election casting a ballot in what we hope is as fair and transparent election as possible—you would do us all a favour if you would take your cue from Manitoba, Quebec and now Prime Minister Chrétien, in terms of the federal rules, and take the necessary steps.

I don't know if it's going to happen. I've said all along and I'm going to say it again because I've said it outside this place: I hope and pray that there is a minority government next time, because it will provide an opportunity for a lot of rebalancing in terms of the rights of the

opposition, the rights of the public, and returning the importance, prestige and pre-eminence of this place, the people's House. Any chance for true electoral reform, I think, would come best and more likely if we had a minority situation where one party was being forced by the others to do that and everybody's scrambling to take credit, and who cares about that at the end of the day, outside of this place? For those of us who are citizens in the Ontario, we would be well-served by getting out of all of this money flowing in from corporations and the union side of things. Again, it won't make it perfect, but it will make it a lot better than it is now. I think it would give the public a greater sense that the fix isn't in and that money isn't buying these elections. Maybe then, referring to the numbers that Mr Prue talked about in terms of the participation rate going down among the public in elections, perhaps we can turn that trend so that people have enough confidence that their participation matters, and that the big bags of money that are flowing around are no longer part of the political process. It would be a win for all of us. I urge all three parties to make a commitment to make that kind of change as an improvement to democracy in Ontario.

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I'm pleased to join the debate and add my support to the resolution calling for full details of the dealings between companies and the government of Ontario.

I just want to refresh the public's mind on what we're dealing with here. An individual was appointed by the government to the Ontario Pension Board. At the time the individual was appointed, he was the chair of the fundraising organization for the Progressive Conservative Party. He was appointed for a period of eight months, I believe. He was on the pension board as he continued to serve as the chair of the fundraising organization for the Progressive Conservative Party.

He then became chair of the pension board. The pension board has made a loan to a company to purchase unserviced land, which is, for a pension fund, a very unusual investment because it's land that will not be developed, I gather, for many years. I believe the public has a right to see the details of those arrangements.

I just want to refresh the public's memory that I and my colleague Mr Crozier were on the committee that interviewed Mr Weiss when he came before us to be appointed to the pension board. I and Mr Crozier were quite surprised at the time when he said, "I plan to finish performing my current duties at the PC Ontario fund ... and while I'm performing those duties I will waive the standard per diem." I was surprised, frankly, that he said he would stay on, raising money for the Progressive Conservative Party, and go on the pension board. My colleague Mr Crozier said, "Do you see then your position, being in charge of corporate fundraising for the Progressive Conservative Party, as being any kind of a conflict while at the same time you're managing investments for the Ontario pension fund?" Mr Weiss said no, but we subsequently found out that the major contributor to the Progressive Conservative Party continued to make major contributions to the Conservative Party and then

subsequently the pension board lent a substantial amount of money to allow that individual and his companies to purchase the land.

I also raised questions about Mr Weiss's appointment and said to him, "How do we respond to pensioners who say, 'What is the government doing putting an obvious partisan on the board?'" As I say, it has nothing to do with you, Mr Weiss; it's more that you are totally tied to the party.... Why wouldn't you have sought another position that isn't as sensitive to this and let the Premier appoint to some sensitive board like this someone who is less clearly tied?"

You put yourself and the Legislature in a very difficult position. You are going on the pension board, managing public service pensions—and I would say there's nothing more sensitive to people than their pensions—and at the same time you are out raising money for the Progressive Conservative Party. You're in a conflict. I said, "It has nothing to do with your professional qualifications, Mr Weiss. As far as I can determine, you're a competent individual." But we raised at the time this obvious potential for conflict, both Mr Crozier and myself.

This gets to the heart of standards. If the government is prepared to put the individual who is spearheading political fundraising on a pension board—and he continues, by the way, for many months to be in charge of fundraising, and sits on the pension board and then becomes chair and, for the first time in the history of this pension board, it makes an investment in raw, unserviced land, and the loan happens to be to the largest contributor to the Progressive Conservative Party—I have no hesitation in raising this issue. I raised it on March 27, 2000, when I thought it was inappropriate then. We raised this potential for conflict. Frankly, based on the evidence, I think we were, in many respects, visionary in identifying this as a potential significant issue. We find out he becomes chair of the board, an unusual—I say "unusual" because it wasn't done before and it hasn't been done since. It's an unusual move by the pension board to invest in raw, unserviced land that happens to be owned by the major contributor to the party.

I think the public has every right to have access to and a public airing of the relationship between this company and the people of Ontario. That's why I'm pleased to support the resolution.

1740

Mr Smitherman: I'm pleased to join this debate. I'm not surprised, but would like to pay a moment or two of comment to the irony of the fact that the government, which has this afternoon been presenting such a partisan response to this, is apparently out of speakers who are willing to stand in their place and try to defend what is indefensible. I think that speaks for a change in the environment of this place, because usually there's no shortage of those fellows over there who will stand up and mouth back the government's line to us. But today we see they are in short order.

The government whip, who gets a car, essentially, as his chief perk associated with his job, was willing to stand up and make a partisan rant—

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Minister of Public Safety and Security): You'd never do that, George.

Mr Smitherman: —but I think any fair-minded Ontarian who looked into the affairs of this organization—I see the minister from Brockville won't let us down. He'll be here to heckle, but we won't see him standing in his place and taking his government's time to put on record the extent to which he has comfort with this, I think, rather unsavoury set of circumstances. But that should come as no surprise; that's his standard operating procedure.

What have we got here? A political party so long in office that they think pension funds in the province of Ontario are their own private playpen, that there is no responsibility whatsoever to conduct themselves in an appropriate fashion with the billions of dollars of pension funds that are not theirs but that they are the custodians of.

They operate as if these are their very funds to do with what they wish. And what do they wish to do with them? Reward their best friends by embarking on new relationships, investing pension funds in the highest-risk real estate development known to this industry. They have attempted to create the impression that they did deals like this all the time, but this is not the case. It seems that until these two folks, Mr Cortellucci and Mr Weiss, bellied up to the bar together at a political fundraiser, the very idea that Ontario pension funds would be made available for raw land speculation had never crossed the desk or the boardroom table at the Ontario Pension Board. It took this magic alignment of the largest single contributor to the PC Party and the long-time staff fundraiser of the PC Party to come together and decide that Ontario's pension funds, the funds belonging to the employees of the province of Ontario, should be put at risk in a move to this highly speculative and high-risk type of deal.

Don't take my word for the characterization that real estate development dealing with speculation and land long into the future is high-risk. Ask anybody who works in the business of land development and they will tell you that's exactly what has gone on here.

One of the things I found most interesting in response to these concerns we've raised is that Mr Cortellucci, an extraordinarily powerful figure in that government and one whose affairs are so deeply intertwined with almost every member of the cabinet, was seen on TV to say, "Oh, you said these lands are not going to be developed for 20 or 25 years? Nah. Ignore those official plans. Ignore what it says on the public record about Brampton's plans" around the development of these lands that he owns. Instead, he says, "With my power and my connections and all of the inside knowledge I have, these lands will be developed in five or maybe 10 years at the outside." That's what I saw him saying on TV, and that helps to highlight the extent to which the rot is so deep over there.

Mr Weiss, the staff political fundraiser of the PC Party, is plucked from that perch and dropped in to head

an organization, and in the time he's been there, what have we seen? We've seen this move to highly speculative land deals, putting pension funds into the highest-risk kind of development. We've seen him participate early on as a double-dipper, on that board and at the same time playing his role as a PC fundraiser. And we've seen the extraordinary excesses with his salary going up, up, up.

I would say that the government members who have not beckoned their courage are the wise ones. The ones who have not decided to put on record their support for what their government is up to are the wise ones, because we now have evidence from some members opposite that they're willing to go to any cost to try to defend the indefensible.

I ask you, Mr Speaker, and I ask all members and the people at home who are looking in: when you look at the facts, when you see the connections that have been made and you see the move into high-risk land development associated with speculation on raw land so far from a waste and sewer pipe that one can only imagine when development will be possible, is that the kind of thing you want your government involved in, where the relationships that are established at a political fundraiser are the most important thing that occurs?

I see the member from Perth-Middlesex chirping. We can only assume that, as a loyal member of the government, he supports these kinds of relationships. I don't.

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): It's a pleasure to rise and speak to this issue. I want to reveal to the people at home what this issue is really about and what the Liberal strategy is right now, as we are maybe in an election year or headed into one in 2004, and that is to attack people. They cannot win an election on policy, and they know that. They've been advised of that. Their strategy now is to attack people.

In this situation at the Ontario Pension Board, the NDP have a representative on that board and the Liberals have a representative on the board, appointed by the David Peterson Liberal government. The former principal secretary to Bob Rae is on the pension board. These gentlemen approved the loans in question. The members opposite make it sound like only one person, a Tory, approved these loans. The fact of the matter is that the Liberals have someone on that board and he approved them, and the NDP have someone on the board, the former principal secretary to Bob Rae, and he approved them.

What's really behind all this? It's like I said at the outset: the Liberals are switching strategy now. It's a strategy they've been going down the road of for six or maybe 12 months. It's a strategy that has some of their veterans, like Sean Conway, very uncomfortable and leaving politics. It's a dirty strategy, a personal attack strategy.

It was evident today during question period. We have issues in the province of Ontario like SARS, like West Nile, like a difficult time in the tourism industry right now because of Mr Chrétien's positions and crazy

comments in the last little while. But the members opposite don't want to talk about those very real issues that affect the people of Ontario. They want to attack Minister Stockwell's integrity. They want to attack people's integrity over this loan.

They went down this road because—and we know this, because when we looked at the expenses of leader Dalton McGuinty, we found he was paying taxpayers' money for political advice from an American consultant. That American consultant said to the Liberals, "You guys can't win an election on policy because you have no policy. The NDP has policy, the Conservatives have policy and the public knows that. You guys have no policy. You can't take a stand on issues. The public knows it. They're aware of it. You can't win an election on it." So what did the American consultant, paid for with taxpayers' dollars, say to Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals? He said, "Get dirty. Go after any kind of thing you can get and try to hang these people. Attack people."

They spent thousands and thousands of dollars FOling every cabinet minister's expenses—and their staff. Anything at all they found over the past eight years, of the thousands of dollars of expenses that have been filed, they tried to discredit those people. That's what they're doing, and that's what this debate is all about.

They don't want to be in debates about mortgage interest deductibility, which is part of our platform. They don't want to talk about protection of taxpayers from municipal tax increases. They don't want to talk about that. They don't want to talk about our four balanced budgets. They don't want to talk about the over one million jobs that have been created in the province of Ontario in the past eight years. They don't want to talk about tax relief for seniors; in fact, they want to increase taxes for seniors. They want to increase taxes on corporations. They want to kill business. They want to kill jobs.

In fact, they're campaigning, because of our Taxpayer Protection Act, on about a \$4.5-billion tax increase, but they don't want that to be the issue. They don't want the public to talk about issues. That was clearly evident today in this debate. It was clearly evident today during question period. The Liberals will continue, I predict, to attack people and not talk to the public about policy. Why? Because their American consultant, paid for with taxpayers' dollars, told them, "Go dirty. You can't win an election on policy. Go dirty." That is why several of their most experienced members will not run in the upcoming election.

The Acting Speaker: This concludes the time allocated for debate.

Mrs Papatello has moved opposition day number 4. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1751 to 1801.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour will please stand one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Agostino, Dominic	Crozier, Bruce	McGuinty, Dalton
Bartolucci, Rick	Curling, Alvin	Parsons, Ernie
Bountrogianni, Marie	Di Cocco, Caroline	Patten, Richard
Boyer, Claudette	Dombrowsky, Leona	Peters, Steve
Bradley, James J.	Duncan, Dwight	Phillips, Gerry
Bryant, Michael	Gerretsen, John	Prue, Michael
Caplan, David	Gravelle, Michael	Pupatello, Sandra
Christopherson, David	Hoy, Pat	Ramsay, David
Churley, Marilyn	Kennedy, Gerard	Sergio, Mario
Cleary, John C.	Kormos, Peter	Smitherman, George
Colle, Mike	Kwinter, Monte	
Conway, Sean G.	Marchese, Rosario	

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Amott, Ted	Hardeman, Ernie	Newman, Dan
Baird, John R.	Hudak, Tim	O'Toole, John
Barrett, Toby	Jackson, Cameron	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Beaubien, Marcel	Johns, Helen	Runciman, Robert W.
Chudleigh, Ted	Johnson, Bert	Sampson, Rob
Clark, Brad	Kells, Morley	Spina, Joseph
Clement, Tony	Klees, Frank	Sterling, Norman W.
Coburn, Brian	Marland, Margaret	Stewart, R. Gary
Cunningham, Dianne	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tascona, Joseph N.
DeFaria, Carl	Maves, Bart	Tsubouchi, David H.
Dunlop, Garfield	Mazzilli, Frank	Turnbull, David
Ecker, Janet	McDonald, AL	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Elliott, Brenda	Miller, Norm	Wilson, Jim
Galt, Doug	Molinari, Tina R.	Witmer, Elizabeth
Gilchrist, Steve	Munro, Julia	Wood, Bob
Gill, Raminder	Murdoch, Bill	Young, David
Guzzo, Garry J.	Mushinski, Marilyn	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 34; the nays are 50.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

It being after 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 6:45 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 1804.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon / L'hon James K. Bartleman
 Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Gary Carr
 Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers
 Deputy Clerk / Sous-greffière: Deborah Deller
 Clerks at the Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman
 Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Algoma-Manitoulin	Brown, Michael A. (L)	Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant	Barrett, Toby (PC)
Ancaster-Dundas- Flamborough-Aldershot	McMeekin, Ted (L)	Haliburton-Victoria-Brock	Hodgson, Chris (PC)
Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford	Tascona, Joseph N. (PC)	Halton	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)
Beaches-East York	Prue, Michael (ND)	Hamilton East / -Est	Agostino, Dominic (L)
Bramalea-Gore-Malton- Springdale	Gill, Raminder (PC)	Hamilton Mountain	Bountrogianni, Marie (L)
Brampton Centre / -Centre	Spina, Joseph (PC)	Hamilton West / -Ouest	Christopherson, David (ND)
Brampton West-Mississauga / Brampton-Ouest-Mississauga	Clement, Hon / L'hon Tony (PC) Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée	Hastings-Frontenac- Lennox and Addington	Dombrowsky, Leona (L)
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Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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of Ontario**

Fourth Session, 37th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Quatrième session, 37^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 10 June 2003

Mardi 10 juin 2003

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 10 June 2003

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 10 juin 2003

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THE RIGHT CHOICES FOR EQUITY IN EDUCATION ACT (BUDGET MEASURES), 2003

LOI DE 2003 SUR LES BONS CHOIX POUR L'ÉQUITÉ EN MATIÈRE D'ÉDUCATION (MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES)

Mr Runciman, on behalf of Mrs Ecker, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 53, An Act respecting the equity in education tax credit / Projet de loi 53, Loi concernant le crédit d'impôt pour l'équité en matière d'éducation.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: We're seeking unanimous consent for the two opposition parties, the official opposition and the third party, to stand down their leads with respect to the debate during second reading on this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Mr Kormos has asked unanimous consent for the two opposition parties to stand down their leads. Agreed? Agreed.

Minister?

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Minister of Public Safety and Security): I don't know. This seems rather unusual, with respect to a point of order in the middle of a call of an order. Apparently there has been an agreement. I am not privy to what the agreement is. But I've been advised that the time from our party's perspective will be shared by the member for Halton and the member for Durham.

Mr Kormos: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Seeking unanimous consent that the evening proceed as follows: each caucus speak for a maximum of 20 minutes, and at the end of that time there shall be—well, the minion is saying no, so pay attention—and at that time the House will adjourn for the day and it shall be deemed a sessional day, but the minion has already indicated no.

The Acting Speaker: Mr Kormos, I understand you're asking that each caucus speak for 20 minutes, with the questions and comments?

Mr Kormos: No.

The Acting Speaker: No questions and comments?

Mr Kormos: And it be deemed a sessional day.

The Acting Speaker: And it be deemed a sessional day. Agreed? Agreed.

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton): I'm going to take my somewhat fascinating 40-minute speech and pare it down to 10 minutes, but I want to assure you, you'll get the very best in the 10 minutes.

The member for way up north is finding that amusing.
1850

Interjection.

Mr Chudleigh: Well, Bruce, Grey, Owen Sound and points beyond.

Interjection: That's not northern Ontario.

Mr Chudleigh: Well, it's way up north as you get to the—

Interjections.

Mr Chudleigh: Mr Speaker, can you get—

The Acting Speaker: Order. I'm having great difficulty hearing the member from Halton, so would the House try to keep under control while I listen attentively to the member from Halton?

Mr Chudleigh: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I was having difficulty hearing myself as well.

The 2001 throne speech promised parents in Ontario flexibility and choice in education for their children—a very important promise to the people of Ontario, I think. It proposed a partial tax credit for parents of children attending kindergarten, elementary and secondary class levels at independent schools.

The Right Choices for Equity in Education Act would assist parents who want more choice for their children's education—and that is the essence of what I'll speak to tonight—including the choice to send their children to schools that offer religious and cultural education. Providing a tax credit to parents who choose to send their children to independent schools builds on that commitment we made in 2001.

We believe in a strong, publicly funded education system—make no mistake about that—and we respect a parent's right to choose. We believe that our children and their parents must come first in Ontario's education system.

In 1995, we were spending about \$12.9 billion on public education. In the coming school year, our government will invest over \$15 billion, and that will rise to over \$16 billion in the 2005-06 school year. This will enable our education system to focus on what every parent wants in Ontario: improved learning and higher achievement for our students as they prepare themselves for the 21st century.

The tax credit is funded from the tax system and does not remove—I repeat—the tax credit does not remove funding from public education, which has been widely suggested by the opposition parties. What it does do is increase the number of educational opportunities available to children in the province of Ontario.

In the 2003 Ontario budget, we proposed to accelerate the tax credit phase-in schedule that was announced in the 2002 budget. That would increase the tax credit rate to 20% of eligible tuition fees for 2003 and further increase it by 10% a year until the credit is fully implemented in 2006 at a 50% rate. The tax credit can be claimed on up to \$7,000 of eligible tuition fees per child.

The 2003 budget also proposed to legislate the remaining steps of the tax credit phase-in to establish this plan in law.

Our government has made a commitment to measure student progress by imposing additional requirements on independent schools for tax credit eligibility. We have consulted with the independent school community on ensuring that parents can measure the progress of their children in core subjects. Consultation is a very important part of this program.

Starting in the 2003-04 school year—that will be next September—-independent schools will be required to assess students in the core subjects of reading, writing and arithmetic, or mathematics in the higher levels. They will also inform parents how student progress will be measured, including any standard tests that may be used. This will help ensure that parents will have the information they need to make the decisions about how best to educate their children. Independent schools would have to meet criteria by the 2003-04 school year to be considered an eligible independent school.

Consultations with parents were done in 2001 and again in January of this year. The participants included representatives of various school associations and related organizations from the independent school sector.

Some of the recommendations for eligibility of independent schools from the 2001 consultations include: having the required number of students—it has to be a real school; offering instruction primarily in Ontario, with each student receiving at least 75% of his or her instruction in Ontario; and requiring criminal reference checks of every individual associated with the school who comes into regular contact with students by January 1, 2003. That is something we require in the public system and that is something we require in the independent or private school sector, providing that they are eligible for the tax credit. Also, we have to provide parents and the Ministry of Finance with other relevant information as required.

A recommendation from the second consultation that was created this past January stated that independent schools will be required to verify the status of their instructors with the Ontario College of Teachers. This will ensure that schools have all available information about a teacher's background. This information will also be shared with parents so parents will be able to make the

right choices about the educational opportunities of their children.

Our government recognizes that in a diverse society such as ours, parents will choose schools that are appropriate for their children's needs or that offer a curriculum that the parents desire. Some independent schools provide different types of education which often require unique teaching standards. For instance, the Montessori or Waldorf schools have their own independent teaching certification programs. It's different than our certification of teachers. That's not to say it's better and it's not to say it's worse; that is to say that it is different, and it's important that we recognize those differences in our educational system so that parents will have the choice that they believe will be best for their children. Who better to make that decision about children in Ontario than the parents of Ontario—not the government, not the Liberal Party, but the parents of Ontario? They should make the decision on how their children are educated. They are in the best position to make that decision.

Some independent schools provide different types of education. At religious or cultural schools, parents may prefer teachers with certain linguistic or religious training. Parents may seek standards they feel are important or more relevant to their way of life, to their life choices. The Right Choices for Equity in Education Act is about supporting parental choice in education, and that's particularly important in a province like Ontario. Ontario—I'll give you about 10 minutes. Oh, I'm about over. Mr O'Toole is splitting my time with me, and he's concerned about how much time he might have. But I'm going to do the House a favour tonight. I'm going to cut Mr O'Toole's time down just a bit.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I don't need any. Just use it all. Excellent speech.

Mr Chudleigh: Thank you. You're a wonderful member, the hard-working member from the region of Durham.

At religious and cultural schools, parents make those choices. Parents make those choices on the basis of what they believe is relevant for their children in a population such as Ontario has, especially Ontario, which has perhaps one of the most diverse populations in the world. There are few places in the world where you can imagine that a more diverse population lives. When all of those people from different parts of the world come and make this such a strong community of diversity, providing them with the opportunity to educate their children the way that they were educated, to educate their children in religious and cultural methods, only makes this province stronger, when we have that kind of background to enforce the future of our province.

This particular act is one I would support strongly. I really can't understand the opposition's opposition to it, other than their being the opposition and therefore they would be opposed to it. To give Ontario's culture the kind of strength it needs for the future, to enhance the needs of Ontario's parents: this act will do that, it'll do it in spades and it will help create the kind of Ontario I

believe every member of this House wants to have in the future. It'll make for a stronger Ontario, a better Ontario, a better educated Ontario, and that will make us stronger in the 21st century.

1900

Mr O'Toole: I certainly appreciate the member sharing his time with me, although it was completely unexpected. I would like to find the member for Erie-Lincoln a bit of time as well because there's more to be done, as we all know, to make the right choices. Certainly the equity in education act we're debating is one I take great interest in.

I must put on the record here, just to start in a fair-minded way—I'll set that pen down because it's gotten me into trouble lots of times—that the equity in education tax credit is, of course, controversial. Just earlier today the estimates committee was sitting. Out of respect, in that committee we have Mr Gerretsen, the member for Kingston and the Islands, and we also have Mr Kennedy, who is the member for Parkdale-High Park, as well as Mr Marchese, who is from Trinity-Spadina, and on the government side I'm privileged to sit there with the parliamentary assistant, Ted Arnott.

The Minister of Education, Elizabeth Witmer, in very respectful form talked at some length about her commitment to public education. I can tell you that as a parent—I've always said this and perhaps it's a bit redundant for members sitting here who have probably heard me give this speech many times—I have, as have many of us here, followed education since the time I was elected as a trustee, I think it was in the 1982 election.

At that time, education reform was just beginning. The genesis of education changes was taking place. Of course it was a Conservative government under Bill Davis that introduced a couple of very important changes to education at that time. The first one was Bill 82, which introduced for the first time ever the funding of special education in a direct sense, and it also encouraged integration. Integration was not embraced, as most changes are, at the beginning very readily. But today I would put to you that any parent with a child with special needs would be very much insulted if there was a thought to segregate children with special needs, which of course is not the case. Shortly after 1982, there was another bill, the extension of funding to the Catholic school system.

In the equity of education, tax issues start to come up. This has been long debated, over 20 long years, equity in education. It becomes quite controversial. I'm sure there's a diversity of opinions, not just whipped opinions on each side of the House here. In the three parties, there are probably six or seven opinions on this very important issue. But one thing I've heard consistently, and in most senses in a fair way, is that seniors, persons on fixed incomes, have always had a challenge facing that annual increase in property tax that was assigned to the education portion of the municipal tax bill, the assessment tax bill you pay at home.

The province has actually taken that over, and the rate now, Mr Speaker, you would know, is going down 20% I

think this year. It's now at 0.335. So if your assessment on your House was \$100,000, you would pay \$335 in taxes as the education amount. That education amount is basically transferred directly to the school board and represents a significant change in policy, going back to the whole equity in education thing.

Now we have a student-focused funding model, and equity in education in my view is working. I think Dr Rozanski said the same thing, that it is working, and for the most part most children are funded equitably across this province. There are still areas of rich assessment that achieve more, and there were transitional funds set up for that.

I know the tax credit issue has been controversial for some time. I also have the greatest degree of sympathy—respect probably is a more appropriate word—for senior citizens. That's what, in my view, this is partially about.

I think education takes three important partners, and this is my last minute before I share my time with the member: first, the parent or parents must be engaged; second, the education system, that is, the teachers and support workers, must be engaged, equal partners; third, of course, come the students. Without all three partners doing the best they can for that individual student to achieve their best potential—that doesn't mean equal outcomes—the system won't work.

There's more to be said on this topic, and out of respect for the member from Erie-Lincoln, I would certainly relinquish the floor.

Hon Tim Hudak (Minister of Consumer and Business Services): I thank my colleague for offering to share time this evening to speak of an issue that is of great importance to many people in the riding of Erie-Lincoln. In fact, I remember that when I had declared my candidacy for the new riding of Erie-Lincoln, I met with many parents, strong supporters of the independent Christian schools, particularly in western Niagara. They asked me, as their candidate for MPP, and then as MPP, to be their advocate, to work within the Conservative Party and work within the caucus to try to bring some sort of tax relief to parents who send their children to independent schools.

I know many colleagues on this side of the House had taken a similar undertaking to work within the party and the caucus. I'm very pleased with the budget from two years ago, when this initiative was brought forward by then-Finance Minister Jim Flaherty, and is now introduced by Finance Minister Janet Ecker.

It is not only important to my constituents, but it is very important, in my view, as the member for the area. I think there is a justice issue here; I think there is an equity issue. I know the parents in my riding—I think I have about eight or nine independent schools in Erie-Lincoln—work very hard. They pay their full taxes into the education system, whether it's public or Catholic, just as you or I do, just as those watching at home do, and on top of that they pay the tuition to help support their child's education, in these examples, to have a Christian education in their schools. Tuition on top of regular

taxation: I think it's just, fair and equitable that they be given some form of tax relief on that tuition.

I remember very clearly that day not too long ago when Premier Ernie Eves came down to Smithville, part of the community of West Lincoln. I don't know the last time a Premier of Ontario visited Smithville, the home of Poultry Fest, at the Covenant Christian school. One of the most moving presentations and ceremonies was Premier Ernie Eves's announcement that we are accelerating the independent tax credit and introducing it into law. There were probably 500 or 600 people there. Children, parents, supporters and neighbours were there to welcome the Premier and thank him for this initiative. There was probably the most powerfully sung rendition of O Canada I've heard, because of the pride in the announcement, the pride in their school. They have pride in their heritage and in the work and sacrifice of the parents so they can go to these schools.

It was a great day, and I look forward to voting for this bill on second and third reading.

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): I'm very pleased to speak to this bill this evening, Bill 53, An Act respecting the equity in education tax credit, so-called. When you look at the bill, essentially it is two pages, one an explanatory note that talks about a schedule, and then it's a schedule of payments. So there is not too much substance in terms of the significance of this particular move and of resources. When we talk about resources we have to look at things in the context of how much money this government really has to spend, and if we're talking in the neighbourhood of \$400 million to \$500 million when this is fully implemented, we're not talking about chicken feed here; we're talking about something extremely important.

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What I'd like to establish tonight is to refer to some third party people commenting; take a look at some of the issues in terms of this particular tax credit, what it might do; and talk perhaps a little more philosophically about one of my favourite Canadian philosophers, who talks about the importance of public education and what that means. In a nutshell, it seems to me at this particular time, when public education has been so eroded in terms of its quality and in terms of the resources that it has to deal with, that we can ill-afford to be more divisive and to create more factions than we have at the moment.

I'd like to refer back to close to 1990. There were 492 schools and there were about 63,700 various students in the private school system. Around 1999 that grew to 722 and 102,000 students. We don't have this year's, 2003, but 2001-02: 766 private schools and 112,000 students; then the most recent, on the rolling tab that the Legislative Assembly research officers take a look at, 804. So you can see that it's growing; it's now more than 5% of all the students who go to school in Ontario. It's growing at a pace that is scary, and one of the reasons why it's growing at such a pace is because the government is providing incentives for people to take their children out of public education and put them into private schools. I

must also tell you that I recall various principals of various independent, non-religious private schools who have said, "We don't need the money. We never asked for this money. All we'll do is add it to the tab of the rich people who send their kids here."

Is this what the role of government is all about, to target and favour the rich? Of course, so does that tax credit for seniors for their rent; that does the same thing. And the mortgage rates, the same thing. Those who have the least get the least, and those who have the most get the most. That is the value system of the Progressive Conservative Party, so-called progressive, of the day.

When we look at private school growth—"We give money to families to take their children out of public schools," says our education critic, Mr Kennedy, whose job it is to critique, along with the rest of caucus, this government's approach to education. Mr Kennedy provided more figures for the estimates committee, showing that 200 new private schools have opened in Ontario and 440 public schools have closed since the Tories took power in 1995.

When we look at the general state of the nation related to education, one of the things that has popped up as an indicator is the ability of our system to retain its teachers. We're not alone in facing that challenge; other provinces do that. They have challenges in retaining teachers as well, but the highest rate of teachers leaving the system is in Ontario, where more than 60% of school boards say they are having difficulty retaining young teachers. Then when you ask what the reason might be, "The classroom looks nothing like it did a generation ago. Class sizes are not only bigger, but students with increasingly complex learning disabilities are now integrated into the regular classroom. This dynamic is accompanied by less funding and more public scrutiny.

"Class size and class composition seems to be the biggest single issue causing the difficulties. That's what's driving the teachers crazy. That's what's driving the young ones out," says Doug Willard, president of the Canadian Teachers' Federation."

Another teacher said, "I think the teacher retention issue has something to do with the public perception of teachers, which is so low now." She is retiring after 33 years. She says, "When I started teaching, it was" seen as "a noble profession, and people thought highly of teachers. You didn't feel like you were constantly battling the government. For young teachers, that kind of battleground and lack of respect, if you're finding it really hard to do, it's easy to ask, 'Why am I doing it?'"

Recently, a well-known Premier, Bill Davis, who was in my opinion a progressive Conservative—

Mr Chudleigh: Hah.

Mr Patten: The member from Halton just said, "Hah." I guess he feels he wasn't a progressive Conservative.

Interjection: He's reading.

Mr Patten: Oh, he's reading. I'm sorry. He's reading another book. I don't know what book it is.

But, "Bill Davis showed all the signs of a man who has held his tongue for too long when he spoke last week at the Toronto City Summit Alliance.

"The former Ontario Premier launched an emotional defence of the public education system and its teachers, reminding his audience that everyone will pay a price down the road if we shortchange young people's education. Davis earned a standing ovation when he pleaded for the public to show support for teachers, who he says work hard, are not overpaid, and perform one of the community's most important jobs.

"Show me a good doctor, a good lawyer, a good whatever and I'll show you a good kindergarten teacher, a good high school teacher and a good university professor," Davis said.

"He went on to chastise the provincial government for fragmenting the public education system with its new tax credit for parents whose children attend private schools....

"Like him, many in the province have watched in despair as the Conservative government over the last eight years has continually attacked teachers and instituted deep spending cuts that have left schools unable even to buy proper textbooks....

"Davis's words should give us pause for reflection. Many who grew up in the Davis era are standing by silently as schools deteriorate, government policy encourages families to desert the public system, and post-secondary education grows beyond the financial means of students....

"In recent years, cutting taxes has been the government's top priority. Davis reminds us it's past time for the pendulum to swing back.

"Davis served as education minister for nine years before becoming Premier. He became known as a champion of public education throughout the province. It was an unofficial title he carried with pride.

"What, if anything, does Premier Ernie Eves champion these days?" says the columnist.

It seems to me that the private school tax credit really epitomizes the Tory value system and attitude towards public education, because what they are really doing is providing incentives. It would appear to be cheaper, because every child who leaves the public system essentially carries with him or her out of the public system about \$7,000 per student. That means the board has less to work with, because they're funded at the moment on a per pupil basis. Then of course they are subsidized up to the tune of \$3,500, which gives you a difference of \$10,500 of resources, all of which is government-controlled. That kind of money could surely be well placed in the public system as we know it.

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It's our estimation that this tax credit will cost a minimum of \$500 million when fully implemented—and we notice that the government didn't implement that portion last year. They had to bring in legislation in order not to make that contribution.

Independent elementary schools in Ontario are not regulated in any manner, beyond the requirement that operators of private schools notify the Ministry of Education of their intention to operate a private school.

Private secondary schools can request inspection—imagine that—by the ministry in order to authorize the principal to grant credits in subjects leading to the Ontario secondary school diploma. The inspection relates to the standard of instruction.

The ministry does not inspect health equipment or practices related to safety and staffing issues. They do require, of course, a criminal screening of any staff who work with children. You would expect that.

Private schools do not have to teach the provincial curriculum.

Private schools do not have to participate in standardized testing, with the exception of schools that wish to participate in such testing.

Private schools do not have to hire certified teachers.

There was, as most people know, a challenge that was brought forward to the United Nations Human Rights Committee by, I believe, Mr Waldman, fighting for equality for parochial schools, presumably. Their decision stated there had been a violation of rights under article 26. It was found by the United Nations in this decision that there were two equally satisfactory resolutions to the discrimination, as they saw it: funding could be extended to all denominational schools or funding should be removed from all denominational schools, along with the elimination of funding for the Catholic school system as well.

The Tory government initially rejected the UN decision. Premier Harris and Education Minister Janet Ecker went on record as opposing any extension of government funding to private schools.

Mr Harris predicted that extending government aid to private religious schools "would remove from our existing public education system at least \$300 million per year, with some estimates as high as \$700 million." Mr Harris argued, "Obviously, such an action would run directly counter to Ontario's long-standing commitment to public education." That was Mr Mike Harris.

On the same issue, Mrs Ecker, the present finance minister, wrote, "Extending funding to religious private schools would result in fragmentation of the education system and undermine the goal of universal access to education."

In a letter to Lloyd Axworthy, who was the foreign minister for the federal government at the time, Mrs Ecker said, "We believe that our commitment and resources must continue to focus on preserving and improving the quality of our publicly funded system." She stressed, "The government of Ontario's policy of not funding private religious schools has been thoroughly examined and considered by Canadian courts."

But of course, as you know, times change and people change their positions—this government certainly has.

As I mentioned before, every student who leaves the public system for the private system represents a loss of

over \$7,000 to the public system. The number of children enrolled in private schools in the province has increased by over 60% since 1995.

I'd like to refer to someone whom I have great respect for, His Excellency John Ralston Saul, who is one of Canada's intellectual giants, I believe. I read one of his books called *The Unconscious Civilization*. It's not an easy read. It's a very challenging way, and of course the members on the other side wouldn't like him, because he is challenging.

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I read Voltaire's *Bastards*.

Mr Patten: You've read Voltaire's *Bastards*? Well, the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care read Voltaire's *Bastards*. He didn't tell me whether he enjoyed it or not.

What he says is, "What is the tragedy of a class-based society? Quite simply, it is a society which has institutionalized selfishness...."

"As for public education, it is a simile for civilized democracy. You could say that public education is the primary foundation in any civilized democracy. That was one of the great discoveries of western civilization in its modern form in the middle of the 19th century."

He goes on to say, "Any weakening of universal public education can only be a weakening of democracy. I personally do not believe that citizens—Canadian citizens in particular—have any desire to abandon the true strengths of their society. I believe that there is a profound understanding in our society of the long-standing essential role universal public education plays in making us a civilized democracy...."

"The ideologies of our day are comfortably ensconced in various schools of economics which have embraced late 19th century simplistic theories of inevitability. You can also find them in various schools of managerialism...."

"All of this represents a tidal wave of specialists who have drawn as their principal conclusion that inclusive systems which serve the public good are no longer viable. In other words, the ideologies and fashions of our day are devoted in good part to a return of the tragedy of the class-based society. They are devoted to weakening the universality of the very public education system which has made Canada such a remarkably successful society."

"Let me point out something which is difficult to accept for many people who are themselves devoted to managing—and managing well—classes, schools and the school system. Managerialism encourages and rewards agreement among professionals. It admires discretion and conformity, it encourages us all to believe that through detailed work, we can rectify enormous problems...."

"Yet the managerial solutions of today are carrying us toward larger classrooms. Why? Because no matter how modern these managerial theories sound, they are usually rooted in the industrial theories of the late 19th century. And those theories are based upon a belief in the economies of scale. What is more, we are consistently bombarded by statistics which assert that class sizes are

not actually too big. This is where the business of discretion of conformity and attempting to solve problems behind the scene comes in."

One more example regarding the closed arguments of inevitability:

"Principals, teachers and parents find themselves obliged to go out and raise money ... engage in private fundraising." We've all seen this. I've been asked many times to go to schools for some fundraiser. "This presents two very real problems. The first is that raising funds for a public school in a middle- or upper-middle-class neighbourhood is not all that difficult. Raising funds in a working-class or lower-middle-class neighbourhood—or indeed a neighbourhood with many new immigrants trying very hard to begin their lives in Canada—is a much more difficult undertaking. The whole idea of private fundraising for public schools is the first step toward introducing a class-based society into Canada. Private funding is, in and of itself, a form of exclusion...."

"By going out and spending a good deal of their valuable time fundraising, principals, teachers and parents are actually collaborating in the gradual privatization of the public school system."

The final statement that I will read tonight—he goes on further—is, "Our success as a country is built upon this system"—the public school system. "It is only with great difficulty that I could imagine a greater betrayal of the principle of Canadian democracy than the piecemeal reduction of public education to private education."

Therefore, we must turn away from fragmenting our school system. Our public school system has brought people from all over the world together, to learn together, to appreciate each other, to see differences not as a negative, to see differences not as something to be afraid of but something to embrace, something to build upon this great Canadian society.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): I'm pleased to join in the debate this evening. I want to start by first suggesting that the difficulty of this bill, for many of us, is not quite as clear as the government seems to make it for themselves and their supporters. They see it as a right and a wrong, and when it's a right and a wrong, all you have to do is be a moral person, an ethical person, and you do what's right and that's the end of it. Most of us were raised to choose right over wrong.

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But this case is another one of those where it's the rights of one versus the rights of another, so it's right versus right. In most cases in our system only one right can prevail. So here we are with this struggle, and this struggle, as I see it, comprises two components. One is, and my friend Mr Patten spoke to this to some degree during his remarks, do we support the concept of a publicly funded school system or not? The second piece is, if you agree such a system is a cornerstone of our society, which I do, do we agree there can be an exception or an exemption from that clear right, the right of the public from any walk of life to have access to that public system, that there be one exception? Can we

accept that exception should be allowed and still maintain the integrity of the argument for a public system?

On the first question of whether or not there should be a public system, if anybody had any doubts as to whether thinking from a few decades ago—and again, alluding to Mr Patten's remarks, going back even further—is still germane in this millennium, I think former Premier Bill Davis answered that question, and I think his comments reflect the overwhelming majority of public opinion in the province. So the notion that there be a public system that everyone would attend and that all the focus go on to that public system is one that is as relevant today, and one could even argue more than ever, for us here in Canada, and in Ontario even more so beyond that, because value added to work is what gives us our competitive advantage.

Notwithstanding that the government has not raised the minimum wage for eight years, in the main our competitiveness in terms of productivity comes not from whether we have the lowest wages among those we are competing with, not from whether we have the lowest and weakest health and safety laws, not from whether we have the lowest rate of unionization, and certainly not from whether we have the weakest environmental protection laws—quite the contrary. We're able to have some of the strongest, most public-benefiting legislation in all those areas because there's one area where we are so head and shoulders above almost every other jurisdiction that we can afford to still be competitive but also have the best of all the other areas I've talked about in terms of protection. It's value added. Our workforce is so skilled, so reliable, so healthy that we can produce in a quality as well as in a quantity that other jurisdictions can't compete with.

With skills now being a marketable item, I know that in Hamilton, and I'm sure it's the same in every community across Ontario, there's a recognition that there is now and there is going to be an increasing skills shortage over the next decade or two, as far as we can somewhat reliably see. That means that in addition to bringing in skilled workers from other countries, it's imperative that we continue to turn out generations of Canadians and Ontarians who will find their place in that value-added, competitive world.

If you think about that at its core, it starts with the education system, right from the beginning, all the way through. In my mind, there's not much of an argument left, if there ever was one, about whether or not a publicly funded education system as the focus of the provincial government is relevant and crucial to our future. That issue I am very clear on. The government says they are. Where we have a little bit of trouble accepting that is that the money they're saying is not going to be diverted from education, at the end of the day is still money that's going into the education world and it's not going into the public education system. So I have some difficulty with what you're saying versus the reality of what you're doing.

Now we get into the issue of Catholic school funding. This is the one that a lot of opponents—or I should say

“supporters,” to put it in the positive—of this legislation feel gives them the rightness that I was speaking of earlier. Since there's such a blatant exemption and exception to this rule, how can you possibly say it's still a pure public system? Fair enough, as far as the argument goes. But I am not one who's prepared to say that the founding agreement that created this country can so easily be just thrown overboard because some people don't feel it fits their view of what the country should or could look like in 2003.

The fact of the matter is, we wouldn't have a country right now were there not the Catholic system. Let's remember too that this is not the only anomaly in terms of political theory. The Charter of Rights and Freedoms is a basic document that says, “These are your rights and you have these rights by virtue of being a citizen.” That's all it takes to be a member of that club, to have those rights. In fact, we extend them beyond that and some of those fundamental rights are extended to any human being that lands at our borders. That's how powerful a document it is. That's how central to our existence as Canadians that document is, yet there exists within that document a clause that basically blows the whole thing out of the water and makes it totally—I'm not sure “unapplicable” is the right word, but it means it's not applicable and has no force or relevance, and that's the notwithstanding clause.

We all know that at the time former Prime Minister Trudeau was prepared to kill the deal that was coming together with nine of the 10 provinces around the Constitution being brought home because of the notwithstanding clause. The notwithstanding clause says basically that in a democracy there are certain times when there are exceptions allowed, and it's all spelled out. But the fact of the matter is that a provincial government has the right, through majority vote, to cancel the Charter of Rights of every citizen in that province, regardless of what the federal government might think. But do we consider ourselves to not have those rights because that exists? No.

What about other constructs of our nation? Well, the Senate: there are senators from certain provinces who aren't there based on any population; quite the opposite. According to population, they shouldn't have any. But to make the country work, to make sure all the provinces feel the rights of their equality, there are Senate seats given for that alone, just for that reason. Am I going to hear Tory members stand up and say, “Well, that's not equal any more, so we don't think that should apply”?

There are more House of Commons seats in some of the smaller provinces, again, than the population should demand, but it's meant to make sure they have a presence and voice in the House of Commons, and they were offered those, that formula, at the time of their coming into Confederation, whether it was in the original founding or whether they were one of the provinces that came into the country afterwards. Are we going to now say that doesn't count because it happened so long ago and it doesn't fit the way we view the world now, so throw that

out the window too? If you're going to do that, you might as well take it to Supreme Court appointees.

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I don't pretend to know all the ins and outs of the Constitution—this isn't a federal House—but I do know there's at least one province which is guaranteed X number of Supreme Court justices for the sole purpose, quite frankly, of giving them the assurance that they would feel their rights and their place within the new Confederation that was being created—just for that reason. But I don't hear anybody on the other side suggesting that suddenly those provinces shouldn't have those rights and that those Supreme Court justices who got there because of that thinking should be removed. Why would you use the argument, then, that things have changed and the whole notion of Catholic school funding should now no longer be?

So what do we have today? We have that argument with a cute twist. What they're now saying is that because that exists, that then gives legitimacy to the argument that we should turn around and be giving credits to people who send their children to other private schools, because that's what we've done with the Catholic system, and if you don't want to extend it here, then I guess by virtue of further extension of thought you're saying we should change that; one or the other. Not at all—not at all.

The fact of the matter is that this is money which is being spent because it works for the politics of the government of the day.

We know it's divisive. Even the official opposition party is divided. My understanding is that the overwhelming majority of them are against the bill but that there are some individual members of the Liberal caucus who support it. Why? I have no doubt in my mind that it's because in their hearts and their minds they honestly believe it's the right thing to do.

But I think one also has to maybe take a look at some of the political realities. We are here to reflect our constituents as much as our consciences will allow us. So there's nothing wrong with taking a look at what the political and demographic makeup of your riding is.

All that is a nice way to say that some people are perhaps doing this for political reasons. I don't know. I don't want to impugn motive. All I'm suggesting is that it is a vote-getter. I'm not sure how many people are going to lose votes over this, but I know that some of the members who are getting on their feet and making sure they get a few moments on the floor are doing so because those Hansards are going to be mailed back, and that's going to cover off a certain constituency.

That's all fine and dandy, except that at the end of the day I stand here now representing a community which this government has imposed a virtual dictatorship on in terms of our education system. You may not like those words—

Interjections.

Mr Christopherson: Well, I know you don't. I hear one of the cabinet ministers and a former chirping cabinet minister behind her saying that they don't agree.

Look, the fact of the matter is that Hamiltonians elected trustees, and you took away all their powers and rights and said, "They no longer make the decisions; our appointee does." There's nobody there to be held accountable, because the supervisor doesn't answer to my constituents, doesn't answer questions here during question period and can't be voted out of office for doing harm, perceived or otherwise, to our kids or our education system. By extension, Minister Witmer is the school board of Hamilton. Well, thanks very much, but we have our own trustees, and we'd like them back.

I point this out because I think it is one more example—and certainly the attack on teachers and the change in the whole funding to the public education system, especially for those of us who represent inner-city schools. Although if you go into Dundas, which is in the suburban area of our new city, they're facing school closures too for the same reasons we are at Central School and in other parts of Hamilton: because of the lack of funding, the way you've cut funding.

So I don't believe for a moment that there's the kind of commitment that Bill Davis had to public education, that David Peterson had to public education or that Bob Rae had to public education.

If you think about it that way, which obviously I do, then it puts this whole Bill 53 in a very different light—very different. I don't believe for a moment that this is helpful. I don't think it's going to give us a better education system. I don't think it's going to help us on any front except perhaps the government's political front in certain key areas where they think this is going to attract votes.

So be it. They have the right to do that. They're the elected government. We have the right also to stand up and express ourselves, and I am expressing an opinion that says you have so devastated the public education system that, quite frankly, I don't think you even have the moral legitimacy or right to move into an area like this. If you believe what you say about the public education system and that this really is in some way an addition, an add-on, something to complement the public education system, before you can even begin to make that argument, in my opinion, you should be doing the opposite of what you're doing with our public education system. Rozanski should already be funded, all those changes should be made, and then you'd at least have the legitimacy to raise this issue.

But I say this is the slippery slope. If this approach to education in Ontario continues, then in 20 years or 30 years, there will be a group of parliamentarians in this place, likely not a single one of us, who will look back at the pre-Bill 53 days and say, "You know, we had it right then." We had it right then. It worked for us. It worked for Ontario. It made us the economic powerhouse that we are. It gave our citizens, rich or poor, one of the best educations the world has to offer, and we're about to blow that—you're about to blow that. That's wrong.

As much as there are people in this province who support what you're doing, and I understand why, overall

for the majority of people, for the majority of children in this province, and in the best interests of education and its place in the lives of the ordinary citizen as well as their economic futures, this is a mistake. If this bill didn't pass, that to me would be the correct thing to happen. I suspect with a majority government, that's not likely.

Those are my concerns and I appreciate the opportunity to express them here today.

The Acting Speaker: Given the unanimous consent, this day is now deemed to be finished. This House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow afternoon.

The House adjourned at 1948.

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